



## The Representation of Siddhatta Gotama as a Misogynist in Armstrong's *Buddha*

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### Abstract

The central aim of this research is to critically analyze the representation of Siddhatta Gotama in Karen Armstrong's *Buddha*, with particular attention to the construction of misogyny. The study seeks to interrogate the cultural presuppositions and ideological positions that inform the narrative, while also assessing the extent to which Western interpretive frameworks on gender and authority shape the biographical portrayal of an Eastern religious figure. The investigation adopts a discourse analytic framework that integrates thematic, interdiscursive, intertextual, and textual approaches. The data set comprises 58,076 words and 241 paragraphs extracted from a 224-page biography. The analytical procedure involved systematic examination of language use, discursive strategies, and contextual references in order to identify patterns through which misogyny is represented, negotiated, and recontextualized. The analysis generated four principal thematic categories: the refusal to admit female disciples, the notion of a hijacked misogynist, the depiction of a socially conditioned misogynist, and the rejection of the image of a fully developed misogynist. These findings demonstrate that the figure of Siddhatta Gotama is discursively positioned in ways that resonate with Western sociocultural understandings of gender and religion. Visual mappings and textual schemata further illustrate the discursive construction and partial contestation of misogyny within the narrative. The study offers an original contribution by revealing how a contemporary Western biographer reframes an ancient Eastern sage through the lens of gender discourse. Its novelty lies in demonstrating how processes of cultural translation and narrative mediation produce alternative representations that move beyond conventional or repetitive scholarly interpretations.

**Keywords:** Representation, Discourse Analysis, Social Constructionism, Gender and Religion, Siddhatta Gotama

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### 1. Introduction

The representation of Siddhatta Gotama (SG), as it has come down to us, is not something that is as woman-friendly as some of us would probably still expect (even though there has been a suggestion that this cannot be the whole truth). In fact, as it has been existing alongside the growth of the Buddhist tradition, the persona of SG, indeed, has continued to nurture our patriarchal value system which may still largely account for the cultural subordination, marginalization or de-empowerment of many women especially in some (poor) third-world Buddhist countries of the East.

However, the increasing demand by the oppressed women for greater gender equality or/and fuller recognition can no longer be silenced or ignored (Barnes, 1987). Runzo and Martin, for instance, have observed that the institutionalized religions urgently need:

*"... to redefine [their] attitudes toward gender as women have stepped forward to insist that their full humanity be acknowledged in the religious as well as the social realm" (1).*



One of those liberated women is Karen Armstrong, a world-famed author and biographer. One of her biographies of religious founders is a life account of Siddhatta Gotama titled *Buddha*. For the purpose of voicing her stance against the age-old practice of sexual discrimination, she published it to reveal to the public what she believes to be SG's misogyny.

### **Karen Armstrong's *Buddha* (ABud)**

Born on 14 November 1944 into a Catholic Irish family at Wildmoor, Worcestershire, England, Armstrong became a nun in her teens at the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus where she spent some seven years of her life. After spending her time at the convent, she left it in 1969 for pursuing an academic study at Oxford University. In 1976, however, she started teaching English at a girls' school in Dulwich while writing the memoir of her convent experiences entitled *Through the Narrow Gate*. She also taught at the Leo Baeck College for the Study of Judaism and the Training of Rabbis and Teachers.

In 1983, on an assignment by the British Channel Four, Armstrong visited the Holy Land where her traveling experience turned out to be a turning point in her career as a religious historian, scholar and thinker. She later aspired to reconcile especially the believers of the three religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam through her works and projects. In 1993 with the publication of *A History of God: the 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. The production of this work, which focuses on 'the Golden Rule' believed to be able to strongly unify the believers of the three Abrahamic religions, was motivated by the self-transforming visit to Jerusalem.

Armstrong has also nurtured a passion for Buddhism; even though, her profounder involvement in the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam strongly overshadows it. Her decision to produce the biographical text under the present study entitled *Buddha* is self-explanatory, indeed. The publication of ABud, however, was motivated by the author's own view that, though SG's ancient wisdom can never be transferred intact into the present time, it can nevertheless be re-presented afresh for contemporary Westerners based on their sociocultural conditions of today:

"We can't reproduce the spiritualities of the past because we are 21st century people, but we can learn from history and make the huge effort to translate its wisdom into our time" ([www.uscatholic.org/node/5076](http://www.uscatholic.org/node/5076)).

It seems that her intention in publishing the biography of SG was to introduce the Eastern sage of old to a contemporary Western audience but as one of the sages of Jaspers' Axial period (read "as opposed to the exclusive Buddhist sage sui generis"). In his review of Armstrong's other book entitled *The Great Transformation*, for instance, Huntsman strongly suggests that the biographer is so preoccupied with the Axial Age that she heavily "depends upon Jaspers for both periodization and subject matter" (142).

Drawing on Jaspers' *The Origin and Goal of History*, Armstrong, for instance, has also come to believe that all the sages or philosophers and their respective teachings are fundamentally



quite comparable or similar. In addition to their strong emphasis on the spiritual virtues of compassion and the Golden Rule (Schneider, 2011; Huntsman, 2009), they are all equally involved in the acts of sexual discrimination and gender inequality prevalent during the Axial Age (800-200 B.C.E.).

## **Social Constructionism**

The theoretical framework of the present study shall now be outlined. Known widely as the social constructionist theory, it was initially introduced by Berger & Luckmann in their *The Social Construction of Reality*. According to this theory, rather than being an unchanging fixity or essence transcending historical time and geographical space, a social phenomenon or “reality” is so time-bound and culture-bound, indeed, that it can only be a fluid and dynamic social reality (cf. Burr; Weinberg).

Such a reality, however, is particularly a product of the three-stage process which consists of (1) externalization, (2) objectivation, and (3) internalization (Burr; Galbin). Burr offers an illuminating illustration to show how the reality is socially constructed in real life. According to Burr, an author is said to externalize when “telling a story or writing a book” (7); but, immediately after it has been read publicly, it will become objectified because it starts to have “a kind of factual existence or truth” (7). Lastly, the reading public will turn the story or the book into a reality by internalizing it “as part of their consciousness, as part of their understanding of the nature of the world” (Burr 7).

But, the whole process above can only occur due to the essential role or the prerequisite existence of language (Burr; Kelly; Leeds-Hurtwitz). Berger & Luckmann (as cited in Kelly 50) have stated that “[t]he common objectivations of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic significance”. Again, in Burr’s phraseology, “the way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them, are provided by the language they use” (5).

The notion of this socially-constructed reality is further explained by George W. Grace in his book *The Linguistic Construction of Reality* when he speaks of it as being linguistically-constructed. Grace writes:

“[A]ll we can do is to theorize about reality, or to put it more precisely still, to construct models of it. These models are our constructed realities, and they are reflected in the languages we speak” (6).

But, it must be borne in mind that such socially-constructed realities are never the works of private individuals working independently of others. They are, in fact, collectively brought into existence by individuals or groups of individuals co-working in a dynamic interaction with other active members of their respective societies (Galbin), or, as Eberle puts it, “[c]onstructions are



thus not the subjective business of singular individuals. They are socially derived and intersubjectively shared and enacted” (498).

### **The Absence of the Life of Siddhatta Gotama**

The image of SG has come down to the present particularly through a cumulative process of putting together remembered chunks or memories of him by his early disciples (Shaner). Our current level of knowledge about SG cannot have derived from any carefully-codified biographical source or reference (Thomas; Swearer).

It is only understandable that there has so far been no single most reliable or acceptable biography of the Buddha (Shaner, 1987; Lopez, 2014). In fact, it was many years after the death of SG that the surviving reminiscences of SG’s life and teachings as the only source of authentic information began to be committed to writing (Gadjin). However, as regards when, where and under what circumstances the oral legacy was finally immortalized in written form, it is really hard to tell (Sangharakshita).

Down the passage of time, therefore, only those written records in the Buddhist scriptures have been gaining more and more prominence and importance. Because what the Buddha factually or actually did with his worldly life and his missionary work have faded away in the background, it is unlikely that anyone at present will be able to determine or distinguish the authentic biographical information from the inauthentic.

With the unfortunate lack of historical certainty as well as the fact that more archeological artifacts are yet to be found and excavated, all that is available at present is a life of SG which has resulted from “a wealth of information ... that may be reconstructed from the posthumous record of his sermons” (Shaner 307). It was this much that was handed down to the present by the early authors or disciples.

However, even though “the life history” of SG, as opposed to “the life story of the Buddha” (Strong 3), cannot up till now be made available as something scientifically or objectively verifiable (Thomas; Swearer; Kalupahana), a life account of SG has nevertheless been both surviving and existing alongside “the growth of the Buddhist tradition” (Thomas xxiv). No modern biographer or scholar, therefore, has been able to once and for all answer the intriguing question of what kind of personality or person the historical SG truly was (Gadjin, 1987).

### **Discursive Production**

To begin with, a text is produced through a process involving the use of various units of language. However, the text-producer does not arbitrarily use the language units which are made available by his/her language system (langue). S/he should first select what language strategies to



use in order to produce his/her desired text. S/he can, therefore, decide to include or exclude certain language features.

There are a series of language strategies which are available for use in the production of a text. These strategies include, among others, the use of ideologically-contested words, relational/expressive modal verbs, words with negative/positive expressive values, personal/impersonal pronouns, metaphors, rewording, overwording, and hedging (Fairclough).

To produce a discourse, however, the use of formal linguistic properties alone cannot suffice it. Though discourse is at times used interchangeably with text (Crystal, 2003; Widdowson, 2007), the former is in actual fact superior to the latter. Whereas to produce a text requires the use of the abovementioned language choices, to make a discourse demands that the social context of the text be incorporated as well (Widdowson, 2007).

To transform a sheer text into a discourse, there are certain discursive strategies to adopt. Said to be quite instrumental to the productive process of a discursive text, interdiscursivity and intertextuality are most normal (Fairclough, 1992). In general, the former is an act of invoking certain existing discourses (but after dismissing others) in order to serve the writer's ideological purpose or intention, whereas the latter is that of incorporating and recontextualizing certain texts or parts of texts in order to create a new text (Fairclough, 1992).

## 2. Research Method

The present research adopted a qualitative case study approach, employing discourse analysis (DA) as the central methodological orientation. DA was deemed appropriate as it facilitates a systematic exploration of the ways in which language shapes and conveys social realities (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Fairclough, 1989). The data set was derived from Karen Armstrong's biographical work *Buddha*, initially published in 2001 by Viking Penguin and subsequently reissued as a New York Times Bestseller in 2004. The principal corpus comprised 58,076 words across 241 paragraphs, excluding supplementary sections such as Notes and Glossary. The selection was conducted through purposive sampling, on the grounds that the text provides a comprehensive and authoritative narrative of Siddhartha Gotama's life and teachings, thereby offering a relevant basis for analyzing the representation and reproduction of sociocultural assumptions and values.

The process of data collection entailed a thorough close reading of the text and systematic identification of excerpts aligned with the research objectives, particularly those reflecting themes of gender, spirituality, and socio-ideological constructs. The excerpts were reproduced with specific analytical conventions: italics were used for verbatim text, underlining for key content words, bold type for the identification of textual strategies (e.g., hedging, emphasis), and square brackets for clarifications of contextual meaning. The analysis employed an integrative framework consisting of four complementary approaches: (1) thematic analysis to identify recurring topics



and thematic structures; (2) interdiscursive analysis to map the intersections of discourses across sociocultural domains; (3) intertextual analysis to trace references to external texts and traditions; and (4) textual analysis to examine linguistic selections and rhetorical strategies. This integrative procedure enabled a comprehensive and multilayered understanding of the construction of social reality within the text.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several methodological safeguards were employed. Validity was reinforced through methodological triangulation, iterative coding, and peer debriefing to minimize researcher bias. Reliability was addressed by maintaining a systematic coding framework and an audit trail documenting analytic decisions. While the study did not involve human participants but rather a publicly available published text, ethical considerations remained integral. Interpretative practices adhered to principles of academic integrity, respect for intellectual property, cultural sensitivity toward Buddhist traditions, and accuracy in representation. Formal ethics approval was not required given the nature of the data; nevertheless, the research was conducted in line with the ethical standards of fairness, transparency, and scholarly rigor.

### 3. Results and Discussions

The analysis that was proposed revealed a number of themes. However, of all the themes discovered, the most relevant were as follows: “*refusal to accept female disciples*”, “*a hijacked misogynist*”, “*a socially-conditioned misogynist*” and “*not a full-blown misogynist*.”

#### Refusal to Accept Female Disciples

The issue of SG’s discrimination against the female appears first time in ABud in association with the Buddhist scriptural story of Pajapatti Gotami. Pajapatti has earnestly desired to join the only-male Buddhist monastic order as one of SG’s disciples. However, prior to this, she has done a great service to his life: “[S]he was also the Buddha’s aunt, and had become his foster-mother after the death of his own mother” (B, 151).

In spite of their family relationship, SG has nevertheless rejected to ordain Pajapatti to become his first female monastic disciple. It is assumed that SG’s refusal to accept her aunt has been far-fetched only because she is a woman. In spite of this, SG seems certain that he has made the right decision. Therefore, as stated below, SG firmly rejects Pajapatti:

#### *Excerpt 1*

*The Buddha adamantly refused. There was no question of admitting women to the Order. He would not change his mind, even though Pajapati begged him three times to reconsider and she left his presence very sadly. (B, 151-152).*



The Buddhist narrative is referred to in Excerpt 1 above to show how firmly SG disallows her aunt to join the early Buddhist Order. It is quite obvious that the rejection of Pajapatti is based only on a sexual ground and he will not compromise. Though Pajapatti has been his foster-mother and aunt, SG "adamantly" rejected her. His refusal is final: "*no question of admitting women to the Order.*" The modal verb "would not", which suggests the notion of *complete certainty*, is used to enhance the notion that SG would not compromise at all: "*He would not change his mind*".

The study has discovered that SG's disapproval of the female membership of the Order is based on the following two reasons. Firstly, it can be quite disadvantageous for the continuity of the religious order; and, secondly, it will be a serious obstacle to men's spiritual advancement.

Firstly, underlying SG's rejection of Pajapatti is the reason that women will shorten the life of the Order and, hence, the teaching. If they become members, they will cause a huge disaster to the order. This is the only brief explanation that SG provides his closest disciple Ananda. This is said below:

*Excerpt 2*

*If women had not been admitted, he told Ananda, the Dhamma would have been practiced for a thousand years; now it **would** last a mere five hundred years. A tribe with too many women **would** become vulnerable and be destroyed; similarly, no Sangha with women members **could** last long. They **would** fall upon the Order like mildew on a field of rice. (B, 153).*

*Excerpt 3*

*The Buddha predicted that women **would** blight the Order ....(B, 156).*

To show that SG has rejected Pajapatti simply because she is a woman, the discourse on her rejection is drawn upon in Excerpts 2 and 3. This narrative provides the first reason underlying SG's refusal to accept female disciples. The modal verbs "would" and "could", which suggest the notions of *certainty* and *possibility*, are used to enhance the consequences of allowing women to become monastic members. They would "*blight the Order.*" The mildew metaphor in Excerpt 2 clearly suggests that women are like mildew which could destroy the field of rice.

The second or last reason underlying SG's refusal to admit women into the Order is that women would disadvantage male spiritual growth. The prejudice of the time is that women will hinder their men's spiritual progress by being the "*universal obstacles to [their] spiritual advance*" (B, 154). The implication is that the former should not be around if men are to make their spiritual attainment.

In ancient India, both SG and his male monastic disciples are gender-biased towards women. They victimize them for their own failure in controlling their sexual desires. The men of the day consider women as their problem because the latter are still regarded as sex objects whose role is to seduce men: "*By the first century B.C.E., some of the monks certainly blamed women for their own sexual desires*" (B, 153).



Although SG has not done that to his spouse, he nevertheless shares something in common with the majority of the people of his day. He looks down on the female and think of them as incapable of facilitating men to realize their spiritual goal. In fact, like his countrymen, SG thinks of women as a hindrance to men's attainment of spiritual liberation. However, it must be mentioned here that SG is quite unlike the Church Fathers who have quite simply regarded women as spiritually unacceptable. For SG, it is his sheer attachment to his wife that prevents him from taking his wife with him on his spiritual quest. Therefore, though some renunciants would still take their wives along, SG would not. This is said below:

*Excerpt 4*

*It did not occur to him to take his wife with him, as some of the renouncers did, when he left home to begin his quest. He simply assumed that she **could not** be the partner in his liberation. But this was not because he found sexuality disgusting, like the Christian Fathers of the Church, but because he was attached to his wife. (B, 154).*

To show that women are an obstacle, the discourse on the practice of sexual discrimination in the first century B.C.E. is drawn upon in Excerpt 4 above. The purpose is to show that SG is not unlike most men in Axial India as the majority of them have a discriminative view of women. The modal verb "*could not*", which suggests *unlikelihood*, is used in Excerpt 4 to help emphasize the unlikelihood for women of the first century B.C.E. to be the equals of men. However, the discourse on the Christian Fathers is also drawn upon in Excerpt 4 to mark the difference between SG and the Church fathers. In other words, whereas the latter condemn women in the strongest terms, the latter only blames himself for his own emotional attachment to them.

### **Hijacked Misogynist**

The study has also discovered that, in addition to the abovementioned, SG has been quite seriously charged with *misogyny*. This Western term (of Greek origin) generally means a strong dislike or hatred of women (*Collins English Dictionary*). *How* and *why* SG is represented as such shall, therefore, be examined herein.

To begin with, it should be stated that it is *only* in ABud that SG has been designated as a misogynist. Never before has SG been introduced as a misogynist in any major biographies (Lopez, 2014; Thomas, 1975; Strong, 2009; Nanamoli, 1992; Ling, 1976). In fact, modern scholars seem to have uniformly rejected the assumption on the ground that the charge is possibly too far-fetched (Gross, 2001; Barnes, 1987). However, in ABud, SG is nevertheless represented firmly as a misogynist, as implied below:

*Excerpt 5*

*What are we to make of this misogyny? The Buddha had always preached to women as well as to men. (B, 153).*



To show that SG has committed an act of misogyny, the discourse on SG being a misogynist is drawn upon in Excerpt 5 above. The aim is to add more weight to the serious accusation leveled at him. Surprisingly, the excerpt above implies nevertheless that misogyny is a blatant violation of SG's own principle; i.e. that men "*as well as*" women have equal access to his teaching. The implied message here is that it is blameworthy to condone SG's misogyny. Through the following interrogative sentence this notion is expressed: "*What are we to make of this misogyny?*"

However, even though SG has been so strongly accused of having been a misogynist, there is nevertheless occasional reluctance on the part of ABud to strongly emphasize it. There seems to be an unspoken suggestion herein that, despite being a misogynist, SG nevertheless is not such a typical misogynist after all. Some mitigating factors, which may tone down the otherwise serious charge, have been forwarded. One of them is that SG's misogyny has probably been the result of the irresponsible act of his Chauvinist male disciples.

For example, a view of *some* Western scholars has been drawn upon that SG's initial objection to the ordination of female disciples may have been a fabrication. These scholars argue that certain male disciples could have put their strongly misogynistic words on their teacher's mouth, so much so that the former's views are taken to be the latter's. This is stated clearly below:

*Excerpt 6*

*There seems to be a discrepancy in the texts, and this has led some scholars to conclude that the story of his grudging acceptance of women and the eight regulations was added later and reflects a chauvinism in the Order. (B, 152-153).*

To show that an act of fabrication has been done to SG's wording, the discourse on the conclusion of some scholars on the issue is referred to in Excerpt 6 above. The purpose is to blame the irresponsible act with a scholarly finding. Meanwhile, the excerpt above has raised some doubt about the authenticity of the scriptural texts with the use of this clause: "*there seems to be a discrepancy in the texts*". At least, "*some*" scholars are confirmed that SG's "*grudging acceptance of women and the eight regulations*" are later interpolations by his chauvinist male disciples.

A passage has also been found in the Buddhist scriptures showing that SG's chauvinist male disciples have been behind SG's supposed misogyny. In the passage, the interpolated ideas would read as if they were their teacher's real words. They would make SG appear as an uncompromising misogynist, as can be seen below:

*Excerpt 7*

*The scriptures contain a passage which, scholars agree, is almost certainly a monkish interpolation. "Lord, how are we to treat women?" Ananda asked the Buddha in the last days of his life. "Do not look at them, Ananda." "If we do not see them, how should*



*we treat them?" "Do not speak to them, Ananda." "And if we have to speak to them?" "Mindfulness must be observed, Ananda." (B, 154).*

A part of the scriptural passage has been directly quoted from the Buddhist scriptures in Excerpt 7 to explicitly support the assumption that SG's chauvinist male disciples could have masterminded it all. The use of the adverbial phrase "*almost certainly*" in the above excerpt gives the proposed assumption an extra boost that it is, indeed, SG's chauvinist male disciples rather than himself who have interpolated the passage into the Buddhist scriptures.

### A Socially-Conditioned Misogynist

The third finding that the present study has discovered is that SG's misogyny has largely been the end product of the social conditioning that he has experienced himself. It is clearly suggested here that SG cannot be the only one to shoulder the blame. Here, the heavy charge of his misogyny is re-addressed because there has been an invisible societal force which may have been the biggest culprit of the widespread practice of misogyny in Axial India.

To start with, despite the serious accusation leveled at him, SG should not be held exclusively responsible for his misogyny. Even though this will not acquit him of the entire accusation, the much greater responsibility, however, lies with the social conditions and pressures under which he has lived his life. Thus, as stated below, it is SG's social conditioning rather than himself which is the real culprit:

#### *Excerpt 8*

*The Buddha **may not** have personally subscribed to this full-blown misogyny, but it is possible that these words reflect a residual unease that he **could not** overcome. (B, 154).*

#### *Excerpt 9*

*Other scholars argue that the Buddha, enlightened as he was, **could not** escape the social conditioning of the time, and that he **could not** imagine a society that was not patriarchal. (B, 154).*

The discourse on the scholars' argument about the matter is referred to in Excerpts 8 and 9 to support the idea that it is SG's social conditioning that is to blame for his misogyny. These scholars have strongly argued that SG has not committed a "*full-blown misogyny*." They believe that his misogyny has primarily resulted from his "*residual unease*" which derives from his living his life in a patriarchal social milieu. The modal verbs "*may not*" and "*could not*", which suggest the notions of *weak possibility* and *inability* respectively, are used to help alleviate him from the otherwise heavier burden of guilt. Thus, his misogyny can now be viewed as having been caused by his inability "*to escape the social conditioning*" of his patriarchal society.

It is at this particular juncture, indeed, that the Axial Age is introduced in ABud. The Axial period is marked with its misogynistic treatment of women. During this period, women are said to



be mistreated, downgraded, disempowered, and abused. Thus, living his life in Axial India, SG is inevitably affected by the social conditions or pressures towards the female. This is said below:

*Excerpt 10*

*Sad to say, civilization has not been kind to women. Archeological discoveries indicate that women were sometimes highly esteemed in pre-urban societies, but the rise of the military states and the specialization of the early cities led to a decline in their position. They became the property of men, were excluded from most professions, and were subjected to the sometimes draconian control of their husbands in some of the ancient law codes. (B, 155).*

*Excerpt 11*

*If the Buddha did harbor negative feelings about women, this was typical of the Axial Age. (B, 155).*

The discourse on the social conditions of the Axial period is drawn upon in Excerpts 10 and 11 in order to help re-contextualize SG's misogyny within the broader context of the Axial Age patriarchy. The excerpts above state that the Axial Age men have "*not been kind to women*"; they have treated them unfairly. Being one of the Axial Age men and living under the dictating influence of the Axial ethos, SG's misogyny, therefore, forms a part of the larger social reality. As misogyny is "*typical of the Axial Age*", SG's misogyny too is characteristic of the period.

It is said that in Iran, Iraq and the Hellenistic states, women experience all forms of misogynistic treatments. There is a sociocultural force there which conditions all the people in such a way that, over time, they develop a similar misogyny towards the female. This notion is implied below:

*Excerpt 12*

*It seems that the new spirituality contained an inherent hostility toward the female that has lasted until our own day. (B, 155).*

*Excerpt 13*

*In Iran, Iraq, and, later, in the Hellenistic states, women were veiled and confined in harems, and misogynistic ideas flourished. The women of classical Athens (500-323) were particularly disadvantaged and almost entirely secluded from society; their chief virtues were said to be silence and submission. The early Hebrew traditions had exalted the exploits of such women as Miriam, Deborah and Jael, but after the prophetic reform of the faith, women were relegated to second-class status in Jewish law. (B, 155).*

The discourse on the discrimination against women in the Axial Age is referred to in Excerpts 12 and 13 to show that women suffer from sexual discrimination and inequality wherever they find themselves in the Axial countries. It is mentioned in the above excerpts that the spirituality of this period contributes "*an inherent hostility towards the female*." For example,



Axial women are “almost entirely” prohibited from social life, so much so that they find themselves “relegated to second-class status” by their men.

### Not a Full-blown Misogynist

The last finding that has been discovered in the present study is that, in spite of being a misogynist as charged, SG is never a fully-fledged misogynist. For having done a great service to womankind, the heavy charge on SG as being a misogynist can now be reviewed.

Though he has initially disapproved of women’s participation in the Buddhist Order, SG has nevertheless had a change of heart. His closest disciple and attendant, Ananda, begs him to review his decision over Pajapatti. Subsequently, as shown below, SG allows Pajapatti an entry into the Order, *but* with an additional requirement:

#### *Excerpt 14*

*Ananda tried another tack. “Lord,” he asked, “are women capable of becoming ‘stream-enterers’ and, eventually, Arahants?” “They are, Ananda,” the Buddha replied. “Then surely it **would** be a good thing to ordain Pajapati,” Ananda pleaded, and reminded his master of her kindness to him after his mother had died. The Buddha reluctantly conceded defeat. (B, 152).*

#### *Excerpt 15*

*Pajapati **could** enter the Sangha if she accepted eight strict rules. These provisions made it clear that the nuns (bhikkhuns) were an inferior breed. A nun **must** always stand when in the presence of a male bhikkhu, even one who was young or newly ordained; nuns **must** always spend the vassa retreat in an arama with male monks, not by themselves; they **must** receive instruction from a bhikkhu once every fortnight; they **could not** hold their own ceremonies; a nun who had committed a grave offense must do penance before the monks as well as the bhikkhuns; a nun **must** request ordination from both the male and the female Sangha; she **must** never rebuke a bhikkhu, though any monk **could** rebuke her; nor **could** she preach to bhikkhus. (B, 152-153).*

The narrative of Pajapatti is referred to in Excerpts 14 and 15 above to show that there has been an important change of mind with SG. Excerpt 14 quotes some lines from the scriptures showing Ananda’s subduing SG over Pajapatti’s case: “*The Buddha reluctantly conceded defeat*” (B, 152). At last, SG finally approves of Pajapatti’s entering the Order *though* with a provision. The woman is granted her membership in the Order, *but* only “*if she accepted eight strict rules*”. The modal verbs “could/not” and “must”, which suggest the notions of *im/possibility* and *strong obligation*, are used in the above excerpts to help make it extra clear that Pajapatti has been accepted but as “*an inferior breed*” because she must agree to accept some more women-unfriendly precepts.



For allowing Pajapatti and other women to enter the Buddhist order, however, SG is remembered for having done a great service to them. By ordaining women into the order, SG has provided them with an alternative lifestyle at a time when such a thing would not be impossible.

*Excerpt 16*

*Once he [SG] had given permission, thousands of women became bhikkhunis, and the Buddha praised their spiritual attainments, said that they **could** become the equals of the monks, and prophesied that he **would not** die until he had enough wise monks and nuns, lay men and lay women followers. (B, 153).*

*Excerpt 17*

*They [scholars] point out that, despite the Buddha's initial reluctance, the ordination of women was a radical act that, perhaps for the first time, gave women an alternative to domesticity. (B, 154).*

The discourses on SG's support for equal opportunities and scholars' recognition of his positive contribution are referred to in Excerpts 16 and 17 to show SG's extraordinary service to womankind. In Excerpt 16, he is said to have acknowledged the same spiritual potential between his male and female disciples. The use of the modal verbs "could" and "would not", which suggest the notions of *ability* and *unlikelihood*, help to enhance the notion that women could also develop as spiritually highly as their male counterparts and that SG would not pass away until after he has had an equal number of them. In Excerpt 17, scholars' opinion is quoted to emphasize that SG's acceptance of female monastics is, indeed, "*a radical act*" because never before has anyone else done so.

For allowing women to enter the Order, SG can now be seen as less a misogynist than he was earlier. He does not typify the characteristic features of a fully-fledged misogynist. Having ordained women to become his monastic disciples, he may as well have ceased to become a full-blown misogynist. This is implied in the excerpt below:

*Excerpt 18*

*The Buddha **may not** have personally subscribed to this full-blown misogyny, but it is possible that these words reflect a residual unease that he **could not** overcome. (B, 154).*

The modal verbs "may not" and "could not", which suggest the notions of *impossibility* and *inability*, are used to show that SG is, in fact, not a full-blown misogynist at all. He may not have been a fully-fledged misogynist because his alleged misogyny is, in actual fact, has resulted from "*a residual unease*" that he is unable to come to terms with.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is clear that, in protesting against the discriminative treatment of women, as all that is reflected in ABud, Armstrong has arrived at the conclusion that SG would qualify as a not a fully-



fledged misogynist. The DA analysis conducted on her biographical text has indicated that SG cannot possibly be entirely acquitted of the misogyny charge leveled at him. Therefore, he will remain a misogynist, *though* not a full-blown one. The proposed DA has made it clear quite clear that, through her biography, Armstrong has represented SG to her Western reading public as a misogynist, though not a typical one.

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