

Thesis Title : A Comparative Study of the Status of women in
Buddhism and Islam: A Case Study of Thai
Buddhist and Muslim Women in Bansomdej Chaophaya
Community

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to study and compare of women in Buddhism with those in Islam. The study consists of two parts: documentary and field research. The documentary portion presents the general scope of women in different situations as described in the Buddhist and Islamic scriptures (Tipitaka and Al-Quran respectively) and, where relevant, reference has been made to commentaries on these scriptures.

From documentary research, it is found that both traditions share a similar view of women even though each tradition has a different system of belief and, subsequently, different practices in various matters. In both Buddhism and Islam, the status of women and men is

equal in having the potential to attain their ultimate spiritual destiny. However, on the part of Buddhism, there is some evidence from the Tipitaka that the status of women in the present life is 'a little' less advantageous than that of men, but this can be construed as being influenced by Hindu traditions since the Buddha's time.

It is on the basis of concept of life as mentioned above that this thesis has made comparisons between the two religious traditions, Buddhism and Islam concede that women have important roles in society. They have moral commitments and responsibilities no less than those of other members of society. However, on looking into details, it is found that in Islam women's rights and duties are encodified in social and religious law while in Buddhism, women's conduct is confined to the realm morality. Moreover, it is found that both Buddhism and Islam place women highly in respect of the gracious roles of motherhood.

In the field research, it is found that both Thai Buddhist and Muslim women are in accord in responding that women have a high status and roles as much as men. They presently enjoy the same degree of individual freedom and face the same degree of responsibility in maintaining the family's well-being. However, it should be noted from the survey that Buddhist women are estranged from religious teaching more than Muslim counterparts. Muslim women are relatively more adherent to religious tenets even though they are considered more lenient than Muslim women in the past.