

COURSE TITLE: “Women and Buddhism” with Professor Jan Willis

SCHEDULE: Tuesdays from 7:00-8:30pm: 6/29, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27 (4 Sessions total)

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Buddhist community has always consisted of men and women practitioners--of monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, in that order, largely in deference to the social and cultural structures and conditions of its birth. However, the question of women's place and standing within Buddhism has remained a problematic and often contentious one. In this short seminar, we will investigate why this has been so, and explore the complex and changing status of women--in relationship to Buddhist literature, doctrine, and practice. In addition, we will look at some women practitioners themselves with the aim of understanding the ideals and concerns which sustain, drive, and empower them.

2. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Registration for the **entire course** is required.

Students will need to acquire the books listed below, links to the other readings will be posted on the website:

- (i) Dharma Matters by Jan Willis
- (ii) In Search of Buddha's Daughters by Christine Toomey
- (iii) The First Free Women by Matty Weingast

Reading of **all** class materials **prior** to each session.

Thoughtful engagement with the materials and verbal contributions to discussions.

Three short essays (one-page, typed, double spaced). These will be read and “graded” by Professor Willis.

3. REQUIRED READINGS:

Chapter V, “Society: Class, Family and Individual,” from A.L. Basham’s The Wonder That Was India, pp. 137-189.

Jan Willis’ “Nuns and Benefactresses” from Dharma Matters: Women, Race and Tantra, pp. 13-35. Three Other Selections from Dharma Matters, pp.37-43, pp. 45-65, and pp. 67-79.

Cullavagga X, “On the Founding of the Nun’s Order” from Sacred Books of the Buddhists (PTS), pp. 352-357.

Nancy Auer Falks, “The Case of the Vanishing Nuns: The Fruits of Ambivalence in Ancient Indian Buddhism,” pp. 207-224.

Christine Toomey, In Search of Buddha’s Daughters. Several selections, your choice.

Matty Weingast, The First Free Women; Poems of the Early Buddhist Nuns.

Others **TBA**.

4. REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:

Thoughtful and Engaged attention and contributions to class discussions.

Writing Assignments:

Three short one-page essays (typed, double-spaced and well-proofed!) emailed to Professor Willis on the following topics (more detail during class sessions):

1. Imagining yourself as a 6th Cen. BCE women or girl who hears a nun preaching the Buddha's teaching and inviting you to join the nun's order. Would you join? Why, or Why not?
2. Did the Buddha "hesitate" to accept women into his Order? Why, or Why not?
3. Create and outline your own Buddhist Women's Lineage. Who is included?

5. DATES AND TOPICS:

Week 1:

Read prior to this session: **Chapter V.** from A. L. Basham's The Wonder That Was India.

Week 2:

Readings:

Jan Willis's "Nuns and Benefactresses" from Dharma Matters, and Matty Weingast's The First Free Women (entire)

Writing Assignment: Imagine yourself a 6th Cen. BCE women or girl....

Week 3:

Readings:

Cullavagga X. Jan Willis' "Tibetan Ani-s" from Dharma Matters.

Writing Assignment: Did the Buddha Hesitate?

Week 4:

Readings:

Christine Toomey's In Search of Buddha's Daughters. Choose several Chapters on your own; and "The Cho-mos of Ladakh" and "Tibetan Buddhist Women Practitioners" from Dharma Matters.

Writing Assignment: Create/ Formulate a Buddhist Women's Lineage of your Own.