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Postgraduate Research for Ph.D

WRITINGS ON THE "WOMANHOOD FACTOR":

**A Comparative Study of Voicing the Female Experience in Buddhism
and Judaism**

Submitted to: **The Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies,**

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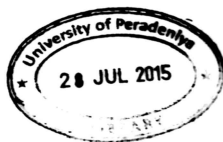
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**WRITINGS ON THE "WOMANHOOD FACTOR": A Comparative Study of
Voicing the Female Experience in Buddhism and Judaism**

Shaula Ashkenazi, 2013, Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies,
The University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka, Ph.D Dissertation

ABSTRACT

This is a multi-disciplinary comparative study, drawing on scholarly thought and knowledge in the fields of Theology/Buddhology, Gender Studies and Literature. It focuses on past and present approaches to womanhood in Buddhism and Judaism that are explored through a choice of canonical and traditional scriptures. The review of Buddhist and Jewish scriptures, as well as of Sri Lankan and Israeli literary texts, lay the foundation for coining the term "The Womanhood Factor", explaining its meaning and features, and presenting the ways the female experience is voiced accordingly in ancient and contemporary women's writings of both doctrines, as a creative expression of their womanhood.

I will introduce the challenge of conducting this comparative study in light of the fundamental difference between Buddhism, a doctrine that features no God, Vs. Judaism, a monotheistic religion that abides by God's existence and authority. I will peruse how Womanhood is perceived and practiced accordingly.

I hypothesize that both Buddhist and Jewish creative women do, indeed, practice the Womanhood Factor and are thus capable of transcending religion and social boundaries through their creativity. This study strives to research and determine whether, despite the seemingly irreconcilable gap between these two bodies of wisdom, women-writers of both Buddhist and Jewish traditions have - within and

through their literary creativity - leaped beyond this gap, as they all experience life with the inherent "Womanhood Factor". Creative writing of women thus becomes a borderland in itself, a tool for understanding human nature and bridge the insurmountable gap between Buddhism and Judaism, through the shared common denominator that is "The Womanhood Factor".

