

## 32. When women are honoured

*Asthiram Jeevanam loke* (Life in this phenomenal world is impermanent)

*Yaddhrishyam tannashyam* (Whatever is perceived is bound to pass away some time or other)

*Asthiram yauvanam dhanam* (Youth and wealth are transient)

*Asthiram dhaara puthraadih* (Wife and children will pass away)

*Sathyam Keerthi dhvayam sthiram* (Only Truth and Fame endure).

*EMBODIMENTS of Love!* In this infinite universe, among the myriads of living beings humanity is eminent. Among human beings, it is a privilege to be born as a woman. There are many examples to demonstrate the preeminence of women.

Was not Raama born as a Divine incarnation in Kausalya's womb?

Did not Lava and Kusha (the twins) become great because they were born to Seetha?

Was it not Jeejeebai's loving care which made Shivaaji great?

Was it not Putlibai's piety which made Gaandhi a Mahaathma?

All the greater sages, and saints, heroes and warriors were born to women "who made them great". Woman is the Goddess of Nature.

*Gaayathri*, which enshrines the essence of the *Vedhas*, is a goddess, venerated as *Vedha Maatha* (the mother of the *Vedhas*).

It is obvious that feminine birth is estimable, adorable and sublime. The *Vedha* also adores the feminine principle in various ways. *Vedhik* rituals and practices accord a high place to women.

### **Feminine aspect of Divinity**

The woman is adored under different names as Sathyavathi, Anyavathi, Angavathi and Nidhaanavathi. Sathyavathi proclaims the truth that the Divine pervades the cosmos, God is not separate from *Prakrithi* (Nature). Nature is a form of the Divine. The *Vedha* testifies to the omnipresence of the Divine like the presence of butter in every drop of milk,

Next is Anyavathi. The five elements are present everywhere in the universe: earth, water, fire, air and ether. These elements vary in subtlety in a progressive order. The *Vedha* declares that even the five elements, are manifestations of the Divine. This aspect of Nature is called Angavathi.

The Anyavathi principle points, out which deity is responsible for what function and describes the deity's special characteristics. Eeshvara is described as *Thrishuula-dhaari* (the bearer of the Trident) and *Thrinethra dhaari* (the deity with three eyes) Vishnu is described as the bearer of the conch, the discus and the mace. Krishna is described as one having the peacock's feather (on his head). Raama is described as the wielder of the bow. The Angavathi ritual worships the different deities with their distinctive features.

The Nidhaanavathi ritual-lays down nine. different ways in which the Divine can be worshipped, such ,as listening, chanting the name, etc.

All forms of worship, are presided over by these four feminine deities. Though the names, are different, the goal is one.

### **Women should be revered**

From ancient times the feminine aspect of the Divine has been worshipped in various ways. The *Vedha* declares that where women are honoured and esteemed, there divinity is present with all its potency. Unfortunately today men consider it demeaning to honour women. This is utterly wrong and is a sign of ignorance.

*Sthree* (Woman) is *Grihalakshmi* (the Goddess of Prosperity for the home). She is hailed as *Dharmapathni* (the virtuous spouse). She is called - *Illalu* (the mistress of the house) and *Ardhaangi* (the better half). People gloat over petty titles conferred on them. But women have been conferred the highest titles which are valid for all time. A home 'without a woman is a jungle.

Men should realise the high status of women and honour and respect them accordingly. They should not make women weep and shed tears. A home where the woman sheds tears will be ruined. Men should give an honourable place for women and lead a respectable life.

The archetypal woman is described as *Aadhishakthi* (the primal source of all energy) having a whole array of powers. She is hailed as the mother of the *Amrithasyaputhraah* (children of immortality).

### **The *thrigunas* in the word "*Sthree*"**

The word *Sthree* is made up of three, consonants, "Sa", "Tha" and "Ra". "Sa" signifies the *Saathvik* nature of women. It represents also the triple aspects of experiencing divinity *Saalokyam* (vision of the Divine), *Saameepyam* (proximity) and *Saayujyam* (mergence). "Tha" signifies *the Thaamasik* quality. But this *Thaamasik* quality is' not indolence and slothfulness. It includes qualities like humility, kindness and modesty. This means that women begin with qualities like meekness and-modesty so that they may serve the family and society in the right spirit. There is a saying in Andhra Pradesh: "Judge a house by its mistress."

"Ra" represents the *Rajoguna*. This does not mean pugnacity and querulousness. This quality signifies the preparedness of women, where necessary, even to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their honour and the honour of their family. *Bhaarith's* history is full of examples of women who fought valiantly and gave' up their lives to protect their husbands and their honour.

*Sthree* thus represents the combination of the three *gunas*. Woman, who should be highly honoured for these qualities, is being treated as a *Abala* (weaker vessel) and assigned an inferior status.

It will not be out of place to mention here that women who have wielded power in *Bhaarith* or other countries have proved themselves to be exceptionally able and successful. There have been many kings in Britain - but no one ruled the country so well as Queen Victoria, Her rule was marked by righteousness, prosperity and efficiency. There was no discontent during her reign. In more recent times, *Indira Gandhi* ran the Government with courage and consummate skill. She

was prepared for any sacrifice in the interests of the country. Among Prime Ministers, she headed the Government for over twelve years. Many others had only brief tenures!

There are several organizations which are being run by women with great dedication and zeal for the benefit of the people. Valmeeki extolled the sweetness of womanhood. What is the cause of, this sweetness? The spirit of sacrifice is the cause, according to Valmeeki.

### **Spirit of sacrifice is found-only in women**

A mother is ready to sacrifice everything even her life, for the sake of her child. Such a spirit is to be found only among women. If a child is grievously ill, the father may say that the child may as well die. But the mother will try to save the child at any cost. It is for this reason, that woman is described as *Thyaagamuurthi*, the embodiment of sacrifice. Men do not have the same spirit of sacrifice as women. Men may present a heroic pose, but do not have the determination and perseverance to carry on the struggle to the end. Valmeeki described woman as the *Bhakti svaruupini* (embodiment of devotion). Man was described as *Jnaanasvaruupa*. The *Jnaani* has limited access to the Divine mansion. But the woman devotee has access to innermost apartments. The preeminent status accorded to women will be evident from all the ancient scriptures.

In this context the role of women as mothers should be understood. The great hero, Shivaaji, was moulded entirely by the teachings of his mother. Raama was taught by his mother Kausalya to follow the sacred path of *Dharma*. The lives of the great show to what extent they were the products of their mothers.

Gandhiji became a staunch adherent of truth after a lesson he learnt from his mother, who could not bear her son telling a lie even to make her break her fast.

It is the mothers who make their children take to the right path, not so much the fathers. Today we find the father's teaching the children to utter lies. For instance, when the telephone rings in the house, the father who is in the house tells his son to inform the caller that the father is not at home.

The practice of fathers allowing the sons to go astray has a long ancestry. It started in the *Dhvaapara Yuga* with Dhritharaashtra, father of Dhuryodhana. Whatever evil deeds his son did, Dhritharaashtra used to say he was a good man. Fathers who allow their sons to go astray are not real fathers at all. Prahlada observed: "Only he is father who advises the son to seek God. Only he is a true *guru* who instructs the pupil about God."

### **The mother is the first preceptor for the child**

Mothers in ancient days used to teach, the children about right conduct, morality and devotion. The first preceptor for a child is the mother. For this reason, *Bhaaratheeya* culture gave the first place to the mother among the four persons to be revered as divine: mother, father, *guru* and guest. The mother gets the first place because she bears the child in the womb for nine months and nourishes him with her own blood.

Even in mentioning the names of deities, the first place is given to the goddess, as in Seetha-Raama, Paarvathi-Parameshvara and Lakshmi-Naaraayana and the reason for the feminine, name getting priority is she is *Prakrithi svaruupini*--the embodiment of *Prakrithi* (nature). The implication in this usage, is that you should realise God through the-propitiation of *Prakrithi*.

### **Earn the blessings of the mother**

In this world, all things are transient. Only righteousness and good name endure. How is one to acquire a good name? By revering the mother. Never go against the wishes of the mother. The son who causes pain to the mother' can never' be happy. Hence, earn the blessing of the mother.

In this context, it should be noted that Russians observe December 8th as Ladies Day. On that day the women have free time. The men have to do the cooking. The women go out to do service in hospitals and other places.

Men and women have to understand each other so that they can live in harmony, in the family. Today people want to live happily but not to lead ideal lives. Parents, for instance, do not set a good example to the children. In the modern age, the father does not instruct the children properly and the children do not pay heed to the words of the mother. The vast majority of fathers today behave like Dhritharaashtra. Where there are some good children, leading a pious life, the fathers rebuke them, saying, "Have you gone crazy? Don't take part in *Bhajans* or social service." Parents who behave in this manner are like Hiranyakashipu, who could not tolerate his son worshipping Hari. Today we have many parents like Dhritharaashtra and Hiranyakashipu, but few who encourage, their children to adhere to righteousness.

Children today do not relish edifying works like the Raamaayana, the Mahaabhaaratha and the Bhaagavatham. They waste their time on reading trash. Parents should see that children do not read bad books.

Now, for a few words of advice to women. It is found that women are given to excessive talking. From today you have to take a pledge not to indulge in talking. Women are found talking not only, in the auditorium but even in the *bhajan mandhir*. Men are fond of strolling around as they please, They observe no restraints as to where they should not go and what places they should avoid.

If women observe restraint in speech and men control their movements, it will be good for both.

### **Ladies day should be observed every year**

If the nation has to prosper, improvement must start with the parents. Without peace and harmony at home, there can be no peace in the nation. This message should be propagated throughout the country on every November 19<sup>th</sup>, by observing it as Ladies' Day. You should teach people how to run their homes well and how to bring up children on right lines. You must deal calmly and tactfully with the men, if they are not cooperating. Though Raavana was evil-minded, his noble wife, Mandodhari, tried to correct him as much as possible. She advised him strongly not to keep Seetha in Lanka, but to restore her to Raama.

From today learn to see the good in others and examine your own defects. Thereby you will benefit both ways. Those who go about finding faults in others are like dogs which go after cast off shoes.

### **Call to women**

*Embodiments of Love!* Mistakes may sometimes be committed in the organization. See that they do not recur. Buddha learnt the proper lesson through a single experience of seeing an old man, a sick man and a dead corpse. He understood the entire nature of human existence from this. People today have similar experiences over and over again. But their minds remain unchanged.

Every experience should bring out a change. For years you listen to Svaami's discourses. How many have changed? How many have developed good qualities? Very few indeed.

Develop pure thoughts wherever you may be. Only then your visit to Prashaanthi Nilayam at great expense would have served a purpose.

As today is a sacred day dedicated to women, they should change themselves and help to change the men and the children. They should develop the qualities of sympathy, compassion; love and sacrifice. Study the lives of our great women, who were models of patience, fortitude, compassion and sacrifice. I desire that you should take up the reins of leadership and bring peace and prosperity to the nation by leading ideal lives.

*Discourse on 19-11-1995 in the Puurnachandra Auditorium*