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Women Are The Embodiments Of Nobility And Virtue

*This land of Bharat has given birth to
many noble women like Savitri,
Who brought her dead husband back to life;
Chandramati, who extinguished wild fire
with the power of truth;
Sita, who proved her chastity
by coming out of blazing fire unscathed
and Damayanthi, who reduced an evil-
minded hunter
to ashes with the power of her chastity.
It is because of such women of character
that Bharat has attained the reputation of
Being the land of plenty, prosperity and
opulence.*

*Among the Vratas (sacred vows) of Bharat,
the Varalakshmi Vrata has supreme
significance.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

SINCE time immemorial, the sacred land of Bharat has been enjoying peace and prosperity because of men and women of character. Bharat has always accorded an exalted position to the mother. The *purohit* (chief priest) made a mention of this in the morning during the course of Varalakshmi *vrata*.

Glory Of Indian Womanhood

Legend has it that Parvati once asked Easwara if there was any way to ensure auspiciousness, prosperity and well-being of the women. She desired that every woman should lead a long, happy and healthy life with her husband, children, grandchildren, friends and relatives. Easwara was pleased with Parvati's prayer and told her about the Varalakshmi *vrata*, which would confer all a woman may ask for.

The particular *vrata* is a boon for all women. Women always strive hard for the welfare of their family. They always aspire for *samata*, *samagrata*, *samaikyata* and *sowbhratrutwa* (equality, integrity, unity and fraternity). Their speech is truthful, their

hearts are full of peace and their actions are righteous. Women, being the recipients of eight forms of wealth, confer prosperity and auspiciousness on the family, society and the world at large.

You might have heard the story of Savitri, who, with the power of her character, overcame many obstacles to bring her dead husband back to life. Even in this Age of *Kali*, it is the prayer of wives that protects their husbands in times of danger. Many women in the past performed Varalakshmi *vrata* with devotion and sincerity and became the recipients of the grace of goddess Lakshmi (consort of Vishnu and goddess of wealth).

Sita came out of blazing fire unscathed when she was asked by Rama to undergo *agni pareeksha* (the test of fire) to prove her chastity as Ravana had held her captive for ten months in Lanka. Though Rama, being omniscient, had no doubt regarding Sita's chastity, he did so only in order to dispel doubts from the minds of people. Evil-minded people are like crows; they are full of doubts and pre-conceived notions. But will the cuckoo stop singing just because the crows are cawing? Likewise, the women of nobility and character are least perturbed by the criticism of the evil-minded people. They do not give scope for any doubts. Their pure heart is their witness and their sacred feelings are their dharma. They follow their

conscience and adhere to truth and righteousness. This is the teaching of the culture of Bharat: *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (speak the truth and follow righteousness).

The Story Of Anasuya And Sumati

You all know the story of Anasuya (wife of sage Atri). She was put to test by God Himself. The Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara went to her in disguise and begged, *Bhavati Bhiksham Dehi* (mother, give us alms). When she was about to serve them food, they said that they would accept it only if she served them without wearing any clothes. Immediately, she transformed them into three infants and fed them as per their wish. She could transform even Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara into small babies and play with them only because of her purity of heart and the power of chastity. Ultimately, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati, the wives of the Trinity, begged her that their husbands may be returned to them. Anasuya, being one of compassion, yielded to their request. The Trinity blessed sage Atri and Anasuya, saying that they would be born to them in the form of Dattatreya. The name Dattatreya signifies one who is adopted by sage Atri.

Sumati was also a woman of chastity. She was pure-hearted and totally selfless. One day, a sage

cursed her husband that he would die immediately after sunrise on the next day. She prayed to God with all sincerity and purity. It is only prayer that can atone man's sins and save him from curse. Sumati prayed, "If my thoughts are pure and truthful, let there not be sunrise at all." As a result, there was no sunrise and the entire world was engulfed in darkness. That is the power of women of chastity. All the gods and sages approached Sumati and prayed, "Mother, is it proper on your part to plunge the entire world into darkness for the sake of your husband?" Sumati replied, "Without my husband, the world has no value for me." Only when the gods and sages assured her of the safety of her husband, did she allow the sun to rise. Thus, since ancient times, women of Bharat led an ideal life and proved to the world the power of chastity. Not only in the bygone ages, even in this Age of *Kali*, there are many women who are leading exemplary lives.

Vratas Are Givers Of Boons

Since ancient times, the women of Bharat have upheld the dignity and honour of the family and the community at large. The worship of goddess Varalakshmi earned them her grace and they could accomplish all this. Varalakshmi is one who grants all the boons that women pray for. She confers on women all the eight types of wealth. Noble women like Savitri,

Damayanti, Chandramati and Sumati accomplished mighty tasks only due to the grace of Varalakshmi. Worship of Varalakshmi confers wealth, prosperity and bliss. But due to the effect of modern age, people do not adhere to such sacred practices. That is why their houses lack purity and sacredness. In Bharat, there is a proverb: “You can judge a housewife by looking at the house.” In those days, housewife was considered to be *grihalakshmi* (goddess of the home) who kept her house sacred and unpolluted. It reflected her own purity.

Fill Your Heart With Love

Today, the food you eat, the water you drink and the air you inhale are all polluted. Man himself has become highly polluted as he has filled his mind with negative feelings, which are nothing but worldly desires. No doubt, one can have desires, but they should be under certain limits. The letters that you write will appear blue when the pen is filled with blue ink and red when it is filled with red ink. Likewise, all that you see, hear and say will become negative when your heart is filled with negative feelings. So, first of all fill your heart with love. Then all that you see, hear, say and do will be suffused with love. *Sarvam Prema Mayam Jagat* (the whole world is permeated with love). So, you will find love everywhere. *Yad Bhavam*

Tad Bhavati (as is the feeling, so is the result). Today human heart has become a den of evil qualities like anger, hatred, greed, jealousy, pomp and show. Love alone can drive away these negative qualities. Desire, anger, greed, jealousy, etc., arise out of body attachment and improper food habits. So, one has to put a check over body attachment and control desires. It is said, less luggage more comfort make travel a pleasure. In order to have a comfortable journey of life, reduce the luggage of desires. One can have body attachment to some extent because the journey of life is undertaken with the help of the body. When one is living with family and friends, it is not possible to give up body attachment altogether. But one should lead a sacred life with the noble feelings of *Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavantu* (may the entire world be happy!).

All the powers that you find in the external world are present in man. The human body itself is a generator of electricity. The human mind can be compared to television and the heart to a radio. When a particular programme is broadcast on Delhi Radio Station, you are able to hear it at the same time by tuning your radio to the appropriate frequency. Today we have radios, but in those days, people considered their hearts as radios. So, make your hearts pure and sacred. All that you see in the external world can be

visualized on the screen of your mind. So, the mind itself is a television. All the powers are latent in man. All that you see outside is nothing but the reflection and resound. When you criticize or abuse someone, it means you are seeing the reflection of your own bad feelings in him. Good and bad arise from within, they are not outside.

God Is Present In The Entire Creation

You can see your reflection in the mirror only when its rear is coated with a chemical. Your heart can be compared to a mirror. It should be coated with the chemical of love. Only then can you see your true self in it. Vedanta declares, *Raso Vai Saha* (He is sweetness Itself). Here is an example: When sugar and water are mixed, it becomes syrup. The sugar and water become inseparable. Just as sugar is present in every drop of the syrup, God is present in the entire creation. Easwara revealed the secret of *Varalakshmi vrata* to Parvati in order to bestow peace and prosperity on all women. Performance of this *vrata* is easy, though it has a potency of giving great boons. You are all very fortunate to have performed it in a sacred place sanctified by the presence of Divinity. These practices have the desired effect if you do them in the prescribed manner with purity of heart.

Betel leaf alone cannot make a pan. It has to be mixed with an appropriate quantity of betel nut and lime before it becomes a pan. Betel leaf is green in colour, betel nut is brown and lime is white. When mixed together in appropriate proportion, they form red colour. Lime adds taste to the pan, but when used in excess, it will burn the tongue. That is why it is said, *Na Sreyo Niyamam Vina* (no good accrues without the observance of rules).

Do Not Indulge In Vain Gossip

The normal temperature of the body is 98.4° F. Fever sets in when the temperature crosses this limit. Likewise, the normal blood pressure of man is 120/80. When it shoots up to, say, 150/90, it becomes harmful. Likewise, everything should be under certain limit. Your speech and actions should also be within certain limits. Act as per your capacity. Before undertaking any activity, enquire, where, when and how it has to be done. If you do not adhere to such discipline, you will be inviting trouble.

All the spiritual practices will yield good results only when they are performed with purity of heart and steady mind. If you have the grace of God, there is nothing that you cannot accomplish in this world. When God can bring the dead back to life, can there be anything impossible for Him? He can change sky into earth and earth into sky, but you should pray

with purity of heart to attain His grace. Do not indulge in vain gossip. How can you expect God to fulfil your wishes if you talk ill of others?

Dharma Forms The Basis Of The World

Embodiments of Love!

Our ancients performed these *vratas* with sacred feelings. But today people have lost faith in such sacred practices. They have faith in things which are transient and ephemeral. First of all, man should transform his heart. He should have the firm faith that God is *hridayavasi* (indweller of the heart). *Deho Devalaya Prokto, Jeevo Deva Sanathana* (body is the temple and the indweller is God). Respect and revere all bodies as temples of God. Then the world will be free from all conflicts. Today, as selfishness and self-interest are on the rise, the world is gripped in troubles and turmoil. In order to get rid of conflicts man should cultivate moral values, undertake righteous actions and love everybody.

Human life is a combination of morality, spirituality and righteousness. Today, the whole world is centred around money. I often tell you, money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows. Money is like a passing cloud. No doubt money is required for your livelihood in this world. But it is not

the be - all and end - all of life. Earlier people believed *Dharma Moolam Idam Jagat* (dharma forms the basis of the world). Now people consider *Dhana Moolam Idam Jagat* (wealth forms the basis of the world). Understand that dharma alone will confer peace and bliss on you. dharma alone will protect you.

During the course of the Kurukshetra War, Bhishma was the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army. One day, Duryodhana and Dussasana confronted him and said, "O grandsire, you seem to be very inactive these days. As a result, our enemies are growing from strength to strength. It is time that you shed your slackness and show your prowess." Provoked in this manner by Duryodhana and Dussasana, Bhishma declared that he would kill all the Pandavas before sunset, the next day. Droupadi, who had five husbands, could be called a *pathivrata* (one of chastity). Who are the five husbands? They do not represent physical bodies. Here five husbands symbolize five elements and five life principles. Droupadi fell at Krishna's feet and prayed that He should protect the Pandavas. Krishna said, "Follow My command, I shall certainly protect your husbands." Droupadi said, "Krishna, who can I follow other than You? You are our everything."

It was night-time. As the war was over for the day, all were taking rest in their respective tents. Bhishma was feeling very depressed. "I have vowed

that I would kill the Pandavas tomorrow. But how am I to kill them who are noble and virtuous and whom I have brought up with my own hands all these years? It is the food of the Kauravas that has spoiled my head (mind).” Thinking thus, Bhishma was pacing up and down in his tent. Krishna sensed Bhishma’s predicament. He always planned according to time, place and situation. His was the master-plan. He told Droupadi to follow him.

Since there was no electricity in those days, there were only oil lamps burning in each tent. After walking a certain distance, Krishna asked her to put off her sandals as they were making noise. Droupadi implicitly obeyed Krishna’s command. Krishna immediately wrapped her sandals in his shawl and carried them with him. Once they reached Bhishma’s tent, He told Droupadi to hurry up and fall at Bhishma’s feet at once. Droupadi did accordingly. Hearing the jingling sound of bangles, Bhishma thought it was a married woman and as was his wont, he blessed her saying, *Deergha Sumangali Bhava* (may you and your husband live long). After uttering this blessing, Bhishma noticed to his great surprise that it was Droupadi whose husbands he had vowed to kill the following day. In the meantime, Krishna entered the scene. Bhishma realized that it was Krishna’s master-plan. He extolled Krishna saying, ”O Lord, none can describe

Your *Leelas* (divine play). They are most wonderful and most sacred in all the three worlds.”

Krishna told Bhishma that he had come to Droupadi’s rescue as she was highly virtuous. What was the secret of Droupadi’s greatness?

Droupadi was always contented with what she had.

She was always obedient to her husbands and would always find time to serve them.

There is no woman greater than Droupadi.

(Telugu Poem)

Today people are conferred various titles like Padmashri, Padma Vibhushan, etc. But the titles conferred on women such as *Grihalakshmi, Illalu, Dharmapathni, Ardhangini*, etc., are very high and sacred. How can women with such exalted titles to their credit be inferior to men? But, unfortunately, today due to the effect of *Kali Age*, men look down upon women and treat them as mere servants. This is a big mistake. The more you respect women, the more you will be respected.

Destructive Power Of Anger

You should see to it that women do not shed tears. Otherwise, the family will face hardships. A

thorn can be removed from the foot, but a harsh word, which has wounded the heart, cannot be taken back. So, never use harsh words. Talk sweetly and softly. The husband has the right to point out the mistakes of his wife, but he has no right to use harsh words and hurt her feelings. You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly. The family will attain peace and prosperity once you observe these principles. Usually, the element of anger is more in men than in women. If you get angry once, the energy gained by you from the food consumed over three months will be destroyed. Not merely that, it also boils your blood which will take nearly three months to cool down. Such being the case, imagine what would be your fate if you lose your temper time and again.

God Always Does Only Good

The story of Jarasandha bears ample testimony to this. Many a time, Krishna challenged him for a battle. However, when Jarasandha would come with fierce anger, Krishna would run away from the battlefield. Seeing this happen time and again, Krishna was asked the reason for His strange behaviour. Then Krishna replied, "Don't be under the mistaken notion that I am running away from the battlefield out of fear. I can kill him in no time, but this is not the right time to kill him. By arousing his anger time and again, I am

draining out all his strength.” Gradually, Jarasandha lost all his strength and ultimately met his doom. Krishna never considered it an insult to run away from the battlefield because he was acting according to his own master-plan. He adopted this method of conquering his enemy to teach an important lesson. All the plans of God are meant only for the welfare of others. He does not do anything for himself. God always does only good, which may appear to be bad to some people. Mistake lies in their vision, not in God’s creation. Whatever God does, it is always meant to help you and develop your sacredness.

Mother’s Love Defies All Description

Easwara revealed the sacred Varalakshmi *vrata* to Parvati, so that the future generations might perform this *vrata* and derive the benefits therefrom. The *purohit* (chief priest) has enumerated the benefits that this *vrata* confers. When a woman performs the Varalakshmi *vrata*, she gets the blessings that she may live long with plenty and prosperity as *sumangali* (a woman whose husband is alive) with her children and grandchildren. Varalakshmi protects seven past generations and seven future generations. Noble women like Savitri and Anasuya enjoyed peace and prosperity by performing this sacred *vrata*. The purpose of Varalakshmi *vrata* is to atone your sins, develop sacredness and ultimately lead you to divinity.

The culture of Bharat considers the word *matha* (mother) as most sacred. In times of suffering, one naturally calls out ‘*amma*’ (mother), not ‘*appa*’ (father). The word *amma* is most soothing and gentle. It bestows immense strength. The first word that a child utters is *amma* or *ma*. That is why the culture of Bharat has accorded highest place to the mother ahead of father, teacher and God. None loves you as much as your mother does. Mother’s love defies all description. Varalakshmi is extolled as *Lokamatha* (Divine Mother of the world). All are her children. That is why the Vedas address human beings as *Amrutasya Putrah* (sons of immortality).

Students!

When you lose the love and affection of your mother, your life will lose its direction like a rudderless boat. Mother is the source of all your strength. So, respect your mother and obey her command. If your mother is happy with you, the whole world will be happy with you. If the mother is not pleased with you, you will become cheap in the eyes of the world. Do not be proud of your youth, beauty and physical power. Realise that very soon you will have to pass through old age. If you neglect your parents now, your children will neglect you.

Women Are Endowed With More Powers

Varalakshmi *vrata* is performed by women. But men should not discourage them from performing this sacred *vrata*. They should provide all the necessary support. Its performance is beneficial not only to women, but also to men as women pray for the well-being and long life of their husbands. Men should not behave in an arrogant way towards women thinking themselves to be more strong and powerful. Truly speaking, women are more powerful than men. The scriptures declare that men have only three powers, whereas women have five. Women are ready to sacrifice even their life for the sake of their husbands. Savitri was ready to give up her life for the sake of her husband. But do we find such spirit of sacrifice in men? If one's wife dies, he is ready to marry again. But women are not like that. They are the repositories of the five virtues of respect, dignity, sacrifice, contentment and prosperity. On the other hand, men are prone to evils of anger, stubbornness and foolishness. Women are the embodiment of virtue and nobility.

Names of the Divine couples like Lakshmi Narayana, Radha Krishna and Parvati Parameswara indicate that women are given place of priority over men. That is why even in invitation cards, people write *Srimati* and Sri (Mrs. and Mr.) and not the other way

round. *Prakriti* symbolizes feminine aspect of God. *Prakriti* and *Purusha* are inseparable. As the women are the embodiments of Lakshmi (goddess of wealth), the world will attain prosperity only when they are respected. Therefore, men must treat women with respect, so that they will be respected in turn. You can see it yourself, where there are women of character, there you find all prosperity. You all know that many countries suffered destruction during the two world wars. It is entirely due to the presence of virtuous women that Bharat remained safe and secure. Bharat owes its greatness and glory to its women. So respect women and make them happy.

11-08-2000, Prasanthi Nilayam