

Chapter IV. Masculine and Feminine Natures

People refer to various duties, rights, and obligations, but these are not the basic *dharmic* truth (*sathya dharma*); they are only means and methods of regulating the complications of living. They are not fundamental. All these moral codes and approved behaviours are prompted by the need to cater to two types of creatures and two types of natures, viz. masculine and feminine.

They connote creation (*prakriti*) and God (*Paramatma*), gross and subtle, inert and conscious, the all-per-vading duet. All this creation came about by the interrelation of the inert and the conscious, didn't it? So too, all the various morals have emerged on account of this bifurcation. All this ramification and elaboration of *dharma* is due to this: the masculine and the feminine.

The chief guides of living

Therefore, the chief *dharma* for the practical progress of the world is the moral conduct and behaviour of these two; whatever any great teacher might teach, it cannot go beyond these two distinct natures.

The *dharma* for the male and female are important applications of the *dharmic* truth mentioned above. Other codes and disciplines are but accessories, tributaries like the streams that meet the Godavari when it is coursing forward. They are related to the various circumstances, situations, and statuses, which are temporary; you have to pay attention to the main river and not the tributaries. Similarly, take the major masculine and feminine *dharma* as the chief guides of living and do not give the minor accessory *dharma*s any decisive place in the scheme of living.

Dharma for women

The Feminine Principle is spoken of as the illusion imposed upon Himself by the Lord, as the energy with which He equipped Himself out of His own will. This is *maya*, the feminine form. This is why woman is considered the embodiment of the highest energy (*Parasakthi Swarupa*).

She is the faithful companion of man, his fortune; since she is the concretization of the will of the Lord, she is mystery, wonder, the representative of the protective principle, the queen of his home, his beneficence, the illumination of the house.

Women, who are the repositories of the embodiment of energy (*sakthi swarupa*), are in no way inferior. How full of fortitude, patience, and love is their nature! Their self control is seldom equalled by men. They are the exemplars and leaders for men to tread the spiritual path. Pure selfless love is inborn in women. Women who are full of knowledge, who are cultured, who are bound by love, and who are keen on discriminating whether their words and deeds are in conformity with *dharma*—such women are like the goddess Lakshmi, bringing joy and good fortune to the home. That home, where husband and wife are bound together by holy love, where every day both are engaged in the reading of books that feed the soul, where the name of the Lord is sung and His glory remembered—that home is really the home of the Lord, Vaikunta! The woman who is attached to her husband by means of love is indeed a flower radiating rare perfume; she is a precious gem, shedding lustre in the family. A wife endowed with virtue is really a brilliant jewel.

Chastity

Chastity is the ideal for womankind. By the strength derived from that virtue, they can achieve anything. Savithri was able, through that power, to win back the life of her husband; she actually fought with the Lord of Death. Anasuya, the wife of the sage Athri and the mother of Dattatreya, was able to transform even the Trinity into infants. Nalayani, who was devoted to her leper husband, could by the mysterious force of her chastity stop the sun in its course.

Chastity is the crown jewel of women. That is the virtue for which she has to be most extolled. Its beneficent consequences defy description. It is the very breath of her life. By means of her chastity and the power it grants, she can save her husband from calamity. She saves herself by her virtue and wins, without doubt, even heaven through her chastity. Damayanthi burned to ashes a hunter who attempted to molest her, by the power of her “word”. She bore all the travails of lonely life in the jungle when her husband, King Nala, deserted her and she suddenly became the victim of cruel fate.

Modesty

Modesty is essential for woman; it is her priceless jewel. It is against *dharma* for a woman to overstep the limits of modesty; crossing the limits brings about many calamities. Why, the very glory of womanhood will be destroyed. Without modesty, woman is devoid of beauty and culture. Humility, purity of thought and manners, meekness, surrender to high ideals, sensitivity, sweetness of temper, the particular blend of all these qualities is modesty. It is the most invaluable of all jewels for women.

Through her innate sense of propriety, the modest woman will ever keep within limits. She becomes automatically aware which behaviour is proper and which is improper. She will stick only to virtuous deeds and behaviour. Modesty is the test of a woman’s grandeur.

A woman without modesty injures the interests of womanhood itself, besides undermining her own personality. She is like a fragranceless flower, which the world does not cherish or honour, or even approve of. The absence of modesty makes life, for a woman, however rich in other accomplishments, a waste and a vacuum. Modesty lifts her to the heights of sublime holiness. The modest woman wields authority in the home and outside, in the community as well as in the world.

Some might interrupt and ask, “But women who have swallowed all the compunctions of modesty are being honoured today! They strut about with heads erect, and the world honours them not a whit less.” I have no need to acquaint myself with these activities of the present-day world. I do not concern myself with them. They may receive honour and respect of a sort, but the respect is not authorized or deserved. When honour is offered to the undeserving, it is tantamount to insult; to accept it when offered is to demean the very gift. It is not honour but flattery that is cast on the immodest by the selfish and the greedy. It is like spittle, dirty and unpleasant.

Of course, the modest woman will not crave honour or praise. Her attention will always be on the limits that she should not transgress. Honour and praise come to her unasked and unnoticed. The honey in the flower or lotus does not crave bees; it does not plead with the bees to come. Since the bees have tasted the sweetness, they themselves search for the flowers and rush in. They come because of the attachment between themselves and sweetness. So, too, is the relationship between the woman who knows the limits and the respect she evokes.

If a frog sits on a lotus and proclaims that fact to the world, does it mean that it knows the value of the beauty or the sweetness of that flower? Has it tasted any of these? It may flatter the lotus, but has it at least recognized what it contains? The honour and respect given to woman today is of this type, rendered by people who do not know what to appreciate and how. They do not know the standards of judgement, they have no faith in the ultimate values, and they do not respect the really good and great. So how can we call the thing they offer “honour” or “respect”? It can only be called “a disease” or, at best, “etiquette”. That is all.

The principle of *Atmic dharma* will not allow the term “woman” to be applied to “a woman without modesty”. Heaping respect and honour upon a person who does not follow *Atmic dharma* is like heaping decorations on a body that has no life in it. The soul that has left the body cannot enjoy the respect shown to the corpse. So too, if a person who is unaware of the Reality, who has not experienced the purpose of the *Atma*’s embodiment, is crowned with fame and glory, who derives joy therefrom?

The modest woman will not care for such meaningless trash and tinsel; she will rather seek self-respect, which is much more satisfying. That characteristic makes her the Lakshmi of the home. That is why the wife is referred to as Lakshmi of the home. If the wife has no such mark, the home becomes a seat of ugliness.

Woman: the prop of home and religion

The woman is the prop of the home and religion. She plants and fosters religious faith or dries up and uproots it. Women have natural aptitude for faith and spiritual endeavour. Women with devotion, faith, and meekness can lead men on the Godward path and the practice of holy virtues. They will get up early, before dawn, clean the home, and, after finishing their bath etc., sit for a while engaged in repetition of the name (*japam*) and meditation (*dhyana*). They will have in their homes one small room set apart for the worship of the Lord. There, they will place images of the Lord, as well as pictures of holy sages and of gurus and guides. They will consider the room specially sacred and fill the atmosphere with their prayers both morning and evening, as well as on holy days and festivals. A woman who is steadfast doing these will be able to transmute even her atheist husband, persuading him to join the prayers or engage in some good activity or some scheme of social service marked by the attitude of dedication to the Lord. Indeed, it is the woman who maintains the home; that is her mission. She is truly the representative of divine energy (*sakthi*).

On the other hand, if the wife tries to pull the husband away from the Godward path, from the spiritual to the level of the sensual, or if the husband treats the wife who is disposed to seek joy from her spiritual endeavour as a person following the wrong track and tries to drag her away from it, the home is unworthy of that name. It is not a home but an inferno, where ghosts and evil spirits revel.

Really, woman should strive to achieve the knowledge of the soul and live every moment in the consciousness of her being only the *Atma*; she must evince always a desire to become one with the divine consciousness. The home where the woman is such and where the husband and wife are leading their lives in the shade of great ideals, where together they sing the glory of the name of the Lord and spend themselves in good deeds, where truth, peace, and love reign, where regular reading of holy books is done, where the senses are under control, and where there is equal treatment for all creation prompted by the knowledge of the basic unity of all creation—such a home is certainly Heaven on Earth.

A wife with such a nature is a wife worth the name. She must have real love toward the husband; only then

can she be called housewife (*grihini*). Only then is she a *dharmic* housewife (*dharm-pathni*, the *bhaarya*), the instrument and companion for *dharma*, wealth (*artha*), and desire (*kama*). She who knows the mind of her husband and speaks softly and sweetly is the real friend. Why, sometimes, when the wife has to point out the path of *dharma* to the husband, she takes on the role even of a father! And when the husband is down with illness, she is the mother.

A woman must accord first place to the service of her husband; that is true worship for her. Her prayers, worship, and spiritual exercises (*puja*) can wait. Without serving the husband, she cannot attain bliss in worship or meditation.

As a matter of fact, the Lord must be welcomed as represented by the husband, and all service rendered to him must be elevated to the level of worship; that is the path of genuine duty. If every act is done as if it is for the sake of the *Atma* and its merger with highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*), then activity becomes dedicated to the Lord. All such acts save; they do not bind.

It does not matter how bad or low the husband is; through love, the wife must bring him round, correct him, and help him gain the blessings of the Lord. It is not correct to feel that her progress alone matters and that she has no concern in his improvement or uplift. On the other hand, she must feel that the welfare of the husband, the joy of the husband, the wishes of the husband, the salvation of the husband are the panacea for her also. Such a woman will automatically receive the grace of the Lord, without special effort. Grace will be showered upon her; the Lord will always be by her side and be kind to her in all ways. By her virtue, she will ensure the salvation of her husband.