

OM SAI RAM

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh

Q 330, “ON WOMEN AND OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES”

July 27, 2024

*The following text contains excerpts from Prof. Anil Kumar’s book
“Satyopanishad, Vol 1,” pg. 42-48.*

Swami! *We hear many funny statements in present day society. People speak about the Women’s Liberation Movement. Some say that women have not been given their due place since times immemorial. They complain that there has always been discrimination on the grounds of gender and there never was a fair deal given to a woman. Women now fight for equal rights with men. We pray to You to describe to us the role of women in our society.*

Bhagawan: This is not true, spiritually speaking. There is a physical difference, but *Atma* or the spirit is one. However, each one has to discharge the duties expected of him or her. In a social order, man and woman are like the two hands, the two eyes and the two feet. One is the positive, while the other is the negative and both are needed for the current to flow and operate. Lord Siva is called *Ardhanarisvara*, androgynous God, (half his body being that of a woman) to explain this unity.

Man and woman are like matter and energy. A woman is described as *Adisakti*, *Parasakti* – Supreme Power, Infinite Power.

You will notice the place given to women in the history of Bharat. Many of them are known today for their sacrifice, wisdom, and devotion, and many of them could give better and sane advice to their husbands. Characters like Savitri, Mandodari, Sita, Anasuya, Tara, Damayanti, Madalasa and Draupadi are very well known. Draupadi served her five husbands most faithfully, never said ‘no’ to whatever work was assigned to her, and led a life of contentment.

When there was a debate between Adi Sankara and Mandana Misra, it was the wife of Mandana Misra, Ubhaya Bharati, who played the role of a judge and pronounced Adi Sankara the winner at the end.

In ancient times, Gargi and Maitreyi were known for their outstanding scholarship and spiritual excellence. In recent times, have you not heard of the role played by the mother of Emperor Sivaji and the mother of Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, in moulding their character and personality? They both learned lessons of life in the lap of their mothers!

It was due to the love and inspiration of Kausalya and Sita towards their respective sons, Lord Rama and the twins Lava and Kusa, that the latter could earn an undying reputation and stand till today as ideals for the entire world.

In our daily prayers, we say, "*Matr devo bhava*," Mother is God. Don't you see that the names of women come first and those of men next, in compounds like Sita-Rama, Gouri-Sankar, Lakshmi-Narayana, and so on? In the past, there never was an instance of women being humiliated, neglected or treated with disrespect. Don't you hear words like 'motherland', 'mother tongue' that speak highly of women?

The *Bhagavad-Gita* refers to seven types of power enjoyed by women as a matter of right. She has quite a few titles that underscore her contribution to the family and her special role. A housewife is called *illalu*, the one who takes care of the house or *illu*. She is described as *sahadharma carini*, the one who guides her husband along the path of Dharma. She is praised as *grhalaksmi*, the very embodiment of the wealth, peace and prosperity of the family. She is called *ardhangi*, representing half of a man, the better half.

Woman stands for patience, sacrifice, forbearance, respect, humility and obedience, the qualities which are usually missing among men. A woman is prepared to die for her child or husband. She slogs and struggles for the progress and the well-being of the family. She is the backbone of the country. She is the light and the delight of the family.

Swami! A change is very much needed in every field of our activity. Almost all walks of public life are nowadays polluted, disgusting and disappointing. How is change to be brought about?

Bhagawan: Truly speaking, villagers who are unlettered, innocent and rustic are living in greater peace and cooperation, and they enjoy more intimate relationships and mutual love than the so-called urban, sophisticated, educated and seemingly cultured people. The latter are full of ego and jealousy. To bring about a change, they need to work for it. They must put in enough sincere effort to overcome bad qualities like egoism, pride, jealousy and hatred.

Butter is no doubt very soft. But in order to make ghee out of it, you must heat it. Similarly, for any change, you have to work for it. You should first of all listen to all good things from good people. This listening, *sravana* is the first step. It is not enough if you simply listen. You should remember, recall, recollect and recapitulate the good things you have listened to. This is called *manana*. The third thing is to practice what you have listened to and learnt. This is called *nidhidhyasa*.

Take a small example. First of all, your food must be cooked in the kitchen. Then it has to be brought and kept on the dining table and served. It is then that you eat it. Further, the food that you eat must be digested, assimilated and only then the nourishment is to be supplied to different parts of your body. Is it not so? Similarly, *sravana*, listening, is like cooking; *manana*, remembering, is the same as the food kept on the table, whereas *nididhyasa*, practicing what is heard, is like eating and digesting.

Swami! We are always in a hurry. We have to rush to so many places to catch up and to keep pace with time and work. In this type of fast life, is it possible to be spiritual? Can we hurry here in the spiritual field too?

Bhagawan: Today, many diseases are due to these three factors, which are very common among you: hurry, worry and curry. Haste makes waste, waste makes worry. So, don't be in a hurry. Patience is very important and essential. In my previous form at Shirdi, I laid emphasis on *sraddha* and *saburi*, sincerity and patience.

It is very common to find people running to catch a train or a bus to go to the office, and so on. You wait for any length of time standing in long queues in front of cinema theatres. But here, you begin to look at your wristwatches, wondering why Swami has not yet come out for *darshan!* So, you must be patient enough to enjoy real bliss. For anything to happen, there is a proper time, pre-ordained, pre-determined and designed by God. You know Arjuna had to wait till his 74th year in order to listen to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the Song Celestial from Krishna, although both of them were moving together for years very intimately.

Similarly, you too should wait. You should not feel, "What is this! Why is Swami not talking to me?" At the right time, I will do the appropriate thing for you. See how a fruit falls down on the ground soon after it is ripe, detaching itself from the tree! You will have to wait till the time is ripe for you. You can't and shouldn't be in a hurry in the spiritual field.

Swami! The growing trend today is to earn more and more money. Ego and pride are growing beyond control. Would you kindly give us the solution for this trend?

Bhagawan: The earth revolves around the sun. So also, man today is revolving around money. In fact, money provides only comfort and conveniences. There are many things that money cannot do.

***With money you can have delicious food in a five star hotel,
But how about your appetite?
You can buy a beautiful bed,
But can you buy sleep?
You can have the latest, costliest medicines,
But can you with your money extend the life of a dying man?***

You think that money makes many things happen, but it is not so. It leads you on to vices. People have two important resources – 'Head' and 'Heart'. Head carries with it responsibility. It has all the knowledge of *pravrtti*, the external world, but heart stands for *nivrtti*, right, internal awakening. Values like sacrifice, truth, charity, love, and compassion, come out of the heart. All that you find outside is only 'art', but 'heart' is inside. Don't be carried away by the outer 'art'.

The breeze you get from a number of electric fans is nothing compared to a natural breeze. Tank water, river water and lake water can never equal rainwater. God is infinite. Where does man stand in front of Him? Why are you egoistic and proud? What

for? Mountains may be of a high altitude. But, water from the mountaintop flows only downward. Similarly, you may be a great scholar or occupy a good position. But if you are proud and egoistic, your fall is near. Light travels upward. So also, the fire of knowledge takes you to the heights.

Swami answers more questions and clarifies more issues in the next session.

Thank you for your time.

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