

Indian Ideals of Women's Education by Bhagavan Das

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DEAR SISTERS AND DAUGHTERS

I suffer from great diffidence and reluctance in undertaking such duties as have been placed upon me today. But the language was so kind, in which my highly esteemed and very worthy and talented sister, the secretary of this Institution, (Shrimati Uma Nehru) — couched the invitation, that it became impossible to make excuses. Yet her letter has caused me much heart-searching and head-searching. She says therein that my blessings and advice would be a great help. But I have none of that tapas, that riyazat and nafs-kushi, that ascetic self-denial, which generates the soul-force, the will-power, that can influence Nature's subtler psychic forces, and enables its possessor to give blessings out of his own spiritual strength. And the too kind words in which she has referred to me here, to-day, in her secretarial report, have abashed me the more. Also, I have [Page 2] no first-hand knowledge, in its birth-place, of that modern life, which is daily producing new changes in the changeful West, and the impact of which is now obviously causing great alterations in the life of the so far less changing East. The vast extent, variety, complexity and conflict, of modern movements and ideas, in all departments of life, may well confuse far abler minds than mine, which have also had the advantage of observing conditions in East and West, both, directly. I feel greatly perplexed, almost overwhelmed, and find it difficult to offer advice confidently out of my own thinking. I will, therefore, venture only to repeat to you what I have gleaned from the sayings of the great teachers produced by this land, thousands of years ago, and also pray for their blessings for this College, for I humbly believe they were able to look with illumined vision, along the unbroken chain of causes and effects, into the past and the future, as well as into the present. But before doing so, I will try to refer briefly to such western ways and thoughts, as I have gathered information about, indirectly, in order to bring into relief the old teachings, by comparison, if not contrast.

OLD AND NEW IDEAS REGARDING EDUCATION AND CIVILISATION

Over a year ago, a white-haired gentleman walked into my place at Benares, one afternoon. [Page 3] He was the Head of the Department of Education in the Columbia University of New York. He was going round the world, gathering up to date information on the subject of Education. We discussed, on that day, and two subsequent days, the aims and the kinds of education, cultural and vocational, and, especially, methods of testing and promoting the special vocational aptitudes of students, so that they may not suffer from the evils of blind competition and mis-fit in life afterwards. I was much more anxious to learn from him, of that land of superlatives, than he could possibly be from me, of India, fallen into the mire and struggling to rise again. I was particularly interested in the last problem, of discovering and developing the peculiar vocational aptitude of each individual student.

Almost the first request I made to Principal Kilpatrick, was that he would kindly tell me, in a single sentence, if possible, the essence of all his extensive experience. He responded readily: "Tell me what sort of civilisation you want, and I will tell you what sort of education you should give to the new generation". I was delighted. "I see that your view is at one with the old Indian view, which I believe in, viz., that education is the root, and civilisation the fruit. Education should be purposive, cultural as well as vocational". That is why the oldest law-book of this land, *Manu-smriti*, which is a complete Code of Life, deals first with [Page 4] Education, with students and teachers, then with the life of the Family Home, which Education subserves primarily, and then, long after, with such ancillary matters as penal codes and civil laws and the executive agency for carrying them out, viz., the public servants, like kings, ministers, judges, soldiers, police, etc.. And to ensure the Education of his children, first and foremost, generation after generation, the Manu lays down that Education is the very first charge upon public revenues as well as private incomes. He enjoins upon the kings and other public servants, as well as upon the public, as a prime duty, that they should support the educationist, the teacher, and warns them that they will receive condign punishment from Nature herself, if they fail to do so.



The State in which the administrator allows the good and virtuous educationist, and therefore good and sound education, to starve — that whole State will begin to starve very soon, similarly, and fall in status and civilisation, with all its people and their servants, the administrators.

It is as obvious as the rule of three, that the civilisation and the prosperity of a people are in direct ratio to their education, their learning and science and art; and if these languish and weaken, the whole civilisation must do so too. [Page 5] "But, now", I went on to ask the Professor, "please tell me what sort of civilisation should we want" To this he replied: "That is more difficult to say. I will not undertake to answer that question. There are such startling changes taking place every day. Even laws and facts of science, held as unshakable yesterday, are put aside today on correction by new discoveries; and ways of life are changing similarly".

THE CRUCIAL PROBLEM

Thus Prof. Kilpatrick stood undecided as to the very foundation and, therefore, as to the whole superstructure of education; stood perplexed before the crux, the solution of which alone gives the key to the secret of the problem of education, and, incidentally, of all other problems of life also; for all departments of human life and human nature, as of all nature, are inseparably articulated together, and form an organic whole.

THE OLD SOLUTION - BY HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

Now, the ancient sages of this land have spoken, with a voice of certainty and authority, on this point, as if they had found the fundamental facts and laws of human nature, and discovered the broad main

outlines of human life, into which all changes in the course of the stream of that life can [Page 6] fit in, as the floods and the falls, the meandering's and the channel-shiftings, of great rivers, all fit in between the permanent high banks. If we put to them the question, "What sort of civilisation do we want, or should we want?" they reply: "Such and such are the basic facts and laws of human nature, such and such are the final ends and aims of human life, the *purushārthas*, the *maqāsid-i-zindagi*, the fundamental values of life (as the new phrase is). All human beings, from the beginnings of the race, millions of years ago, have always wanted that sort of civilisation which will enable them to realise these ends. In the earlier stages, they wanted it instinctively, unconsciously, imperfectly, with much erring. The more highly evolved want it more and more clearly. You should want it quite consciously and definitely, and should guard against setbacks, carefully. The recognition of these fundamental values of life constitutes the essence of civilisation. That essential civilisation, is what you should want. And you should plan your education, and lay down its main lines, accordingly. The means by which, the forms in which, these ends of life, are to be realised, will vary with time, place, and circumstance. They constitute the inessentials, the details, the surface, of civilisation, and of the corresponding courses of education. Some details there must be; but no single one is indispensable; it is always more or less replaceable by substitutes." [Page 7]

ENDS OF LIFE AND ESSENTIALS OF CIVILISATION

The essential ends and aims persist through all such substitutions. The nomadic, the pastoral, the rural and agricultural, the urban and industrial and mechanical, modes of gregarious life, ranging from almost the animal stage to the highest civilisations extant, may all be regarded as such variable forms and matters of detail. They are all gradual unfoldings of pre-existent elements in the race; and all are present also, in some form or other, refined or crude, in every community, savage or civilised. The differences are only of degree of exfoliation and emphasis and form. The essential needs of the race, which give rise to these forms, are common throughout. That no particular forms are essential to civilisation, may be seen in an outstanding example.

AN EXAMPLE

To speak in the phrases of the West, even the most go-ahead modernists, and eulogists of the wonders and achievements of physical science, allow that the Greece of Athens was at least as highly civilised as any of the most up-to-date nations; while Graecophiles assert that no modern nation has yet reached that height of culture, that physical and mental beauty, "that glory which was Greece". What is the reason? Athens was a [Page 8] very small town, of about thirty thousand souls; it had no steam, gas, electricity or wireless, no guns, aeroplanes or submarines, no railways or ships, no machinery and no factories; yet it had a very high civilisation. The reason was that its thinkers and teachers, like Socrates and Plato, pondered on, and taught to the citizens, the fundamental values of life, and called them by such names as Truth and Beauty and Goodness.

TRUTH, BEAUTY, GOODNESS

We, in India, have known these under other names, as *Satyam*, *Priyam*, *Hitam*; or *Shāntam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram*; or the more familiar Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Moksha; Goodness in all action being the object of *Dharma*, Strength and Beauty of *Kāma* and *Artha*, and ultimate Truth of *Moksha*. Islamic culture

remembers these same under the sacred names of Allah, the Source of all Life, f.i., Al-Haq and Al-Alim, Al-Aziz and Al-Jamil, Al-Rab and Al-Hakim, *i.e.*, the True and the All-Knower, the Beloved and the Beautiful, the Protector and the Ordainer. The human soul craves to achieve these divine qualities, and reproduce their grace within itself, even in its pursuit of the ordinary appetites of body and mind. It does so indirectly, darkly, gropingly, for the most part. To do so, deliberately, is the essence of culture and civilisation; and education is justified only when [Page 9] it enables the educated to do so, when it gives them the second birth, makes them regenerate, twice-born, enables them to organise society rationally, make equitable division of labour and of leisure, of work and of play, of necessities and of luxuries, and live their social and individual life so that the satisfaction of the natural normal appetites of the physique and the psyche, whether with or without the help of immense mechanical apparatus, itself ministers to the realisation of these fundamental values of life, Truth and Beauty and Goodness, and through these Happiness.

THE APPETITES AND THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF LIFE

The physical needs for food and clothing and family housing range from the most primitive to the most elaborate forms. The psychical desires for honor, for power, for artistic possessions, for affection and play and sense-amusement, similarly pervade and stimulate and direct all the variations and developments of scientific discoveries and inventions, machinery and fine arts, trade and commerce, and economic and political devices and forms of government of all sorts. The excess and the misuse of these physical and psychical appetites means barbarism or evil and degenerate culture, and leads to jealousies and hatreds between class and class and nation and nation, and thence [Page 10] to wars internal and external, and disruptions of all orderly life, and the reeling back of whole nations into the beast. The just satisfaction of them, and the equitable partition of their objects between the different vocational orders, on the other hand, means true and regenerate culture, and leads to peace and happiness, national and international, and the achievement, by all, in due course, of the great values of life.

PURPOSIVE EDUCATION; CLASSIFICATION OF STUDIES

Education should, therefore, be purposefully planned to bring about such true culture and civilisation. And, therefore, in accordance with the four ends of life, one old Indian system of classification arranges all the sciences and arts under four main heads, *viz.*, *Dharma-shāstra*, *Artha-shāstra*, *Kāma-shāstra* and *Moksha-shāstra*. The first three form one group, the mundane or temporal; the fourth is the spiritual. The due experience of the first group leads to that of the last. The first covers not only the laws made by man, but the laws of nature, *i.e.*, all science, on the basis of which alone can men legislate without grievous error, for the welfare of their community. Take up any statute-book and you will find that every really and positively useful Act therein, every Act promotive of Public Health, Wealth, Comfort, [Page 11] Knowledge, Recreation, draws its support and justification from some facts of science. The second covers all the sciences and arts as applied to the active production of wealth, for the support of human life, and the fulfilment of its wants. The third includes under the sacred science and art of sanctified Matrimony and Domestic Happiness, all the aesthetic sciences and fine arts which minister to the refinement of that life. The fourth is the very foundation of all the others.

CULTURAL-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION

This indicates what I believe to have been the old ideal of the combination of cultural and vocational education. The study of these arts and sciences was divided, in different degrees, according to their inclinations and aptitudes, between students of different psycho-physical temperaments of three main types — men of knowledge, men of action, and men of acquisitive desire. The fourth type, class, or order, was and is constituted by those who were mentally incapable of receiving any higher education. [N. J. Lennes. of the University of Montana. in his noteworthy book., *Whither Democracy* (pub. 1927). shows that even in go-ahead U. S. America, a very large majority of the school-going children are congenitally unfit, by the low quality of their intelligence to usefully pursue studies beyond the lower grades or classes in the schools] These four types or orders — determined for [Page 12] each individual, it should be borne in mind, by his spontaneous variation, in the course of his education, and not by mere blind heredity — form the basis of that ideal *Varna-vyavasthū*, that organisation of society, which is the best form of Communism. Education should promote and subserve this organisation, because it alone, I believe, is capable of solving all the problems that vex the modern mind, and of bringing the essential values of life within the reach of all.

WOMAN'S EDUCATION IN THE LIGHT OF THIS PRINCIPLE

The question arises here: Does this scheme of education, and of culture and civilisation, apply to women in the same way as to men ? The reply seems to be: Yes, the general principle is the same, and it should be applied very carefully. As men differ from men in temperament and type, and, therefore, require partly general education and partly different and specialised education, and as they discharge partly common cultural and partly special vocational functions in the social organism, so the woman-nature as such is partly similar to and partly differs from the man-nature as such, in psycho-physical constitution and vocational aptitude. Her vocation is on the whole different from man's, and it is in every way finer and nobler.[Page 13]

The education of girls should be made suitable to and preparatory for their particular future work in life. If a partition may be made of the great values of life, the task of fostering the Beautiful (through the Fine Arts) may be assigned in larger part to woman; of finding, and setting on high, the Truth, (through the Learned Professions) to man; and of cultivating the Good (through Right Conduct and Right Use of Wealth) may be equally divided between both. Even Sarasvati, quite unmarried and very learned, specialises more in the *vinā* than in books; even Krshna, past-master of all fine arts, is the teacher of the *Gītā* primarily; Gauri-Shankara, Umā.-Maheshwara, Annapurnā-Ishāna, Durgā-Shiva, are the joint parents and guardians of the world. Barring exceptions, which only prove the rule, woman's natural and noble vocation is that of wife and mother, beautifier of life and real head of the home, the husband being the head of only the 'out-house', of the affairs outside the proper meaning of the word 'home', which outside affairs are but *means* to the happiness of the home as *end*. Let there be no mistaking the fact that all the vast and immensely complicated apparatus of modern civilisation, states and governments of many forms, public services of hundreds of departments and high and low degrees, vast commerce, and huge organisations for transport by land and sea and air — all these are merest means; they exist only in order that the family-home may be happy, that children [Page 14] may laugh and play, and the women be glad, in every home. The happiness of the home is their end. The family home is the heart of the state; and in that home, the woman is the heart, the man the head, and the children the limbs. And be it remembered always, what a deservedly honored far-western poet has sung:

It is the heart and not the brain,
That to the highest doth attain.

The ancient sage has also used similar language, with perhaps an even deeper meaning.

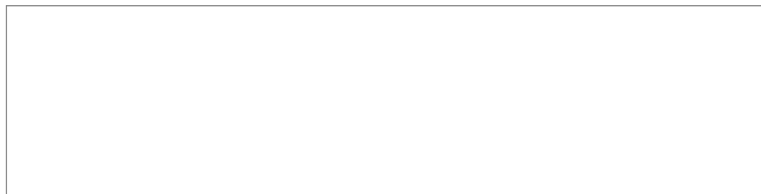


Ayam, This, the Supreme, is in the *hrt*, the heart; therefore the *hrt*, the heart, is also called *hrdayam*.

THE INDIVIDUAL — OR THE FAMILY?

In western thought, it is customary to assume that the individual is the unit in the constitution of the state, and that the state, the nation, the national consciousness, nationalism, is the highest limit and reach of patriotism and human education. The ancient Indian view is that the family, of man-woman-child, is the unit, and that humanism is the ideal limit. At one time, not long ago, it used to be cast as a reproach at the Indian people that they had no national consciousness. Today, after the great War, the West is beginning to think that internationalism, humanism, is a higher ideal than [Page15] nationalism. But the reproach against India was just, all the same, because we had forgotten humanism, and many other good things, and degenerated into crass tribalism and sectarianism; and we have deserved painful humiliations in order that we may recall to mind those good ideals and live up to them again, by passing through a temporary phase of nationalism and its good and ill consequences.

But whatever other trials and tribulations we may be destined to pass through, I most earnestly pray with all the strength of my heart, that India may be saved from one particular phase of Western experience, *viz.*, the setting of man against woman, and woman against man, which seems, to some of us Indians, to be the most painful, bewildering, and all-upsetting consequence of that excessive individualism, an essential feature of which is the notion that the individual is the unit of the state and the community. Our ancient law-giver has decided otherwise; the family is the unit.



The man is not the man alone, but the man, the woman, the child. The sages have declared that the wife is the same as the husband. The house is not the home. The housewife is the home.

This human tri-unity is only the concrete embodiment of the Principle of the incontrovertible [Page 16] Tri-Unity of the Universe, known to scientific thought as God-Nature-Man, to Christian theology as Father-Holy-Ghost-Son, and to Hindu theologians as the Tri-murti.

Jesus the Christ has also said (St. Matthew): "He that made them at the beginning made them male and female and they twain shall be as one." Muhammad the Prophet declares the same: *Min khalaqna kulli shayin zaujain*, "I, the Supreme Self, have created all things in pairs". All this only rings changes on the Upanishat's elemental utterance: The One divided It-Self into Two, became husband and wife. The I became I and Thou; Purusha became *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, God and God's Nature; the Original looked into the mirror of Emptiness, (as the Sufis well say), and saw the reflected, reversed, Image of Itself, whence man and woman are "contrary" of and *supplementary* to, each other. As the Purānas say, "He is thought, and she is language; she is body, and he is soul".

In the West, man and woman are said to have forgotten their older and true ideal, the same as the Indian, of better *half* and other *half*, and to be fighting for equality today. It is as if the right lobe and the left lobe of the same brain should fight with each other. It is madness. Our ideal has always been, not of equality, which involves odious comparison, whence conflict, but of identity of wife and husband, as two halves, *ardh-āngi-tā*, in life, [Page 17] in essential interests, in home and hearth, in heart, in children; and this ideal will remain true so long as the psycho-physical constitution of humanity remains what it is today, and does not become literally androgynous again, or wholly sexless, as legends say it was, millions of years ago.

DOMESTIC LIFE IN THE WEST

Statistics for the Far West, the U.S.A., show that, in the towns, for every two marriages that take place, there is one divorce; and other, even more terrible, facts are mentioned which need not be detailed here. A lady and a gentleman, Indians, returned recently after over two years stay in England and other countries of the Near West, whom I happened to meet not long ago, said that home-life was going out of fashion in even conservative England, and even in middle-class families, the most conservative of all, and mothers were becoming careless of their children, almost as much as the fathers, and left them largely to be looked after by others in a mechanical way, and spent most of their time outside the family abode. Mr. Kilpatrick had probably some such facts in mind, and their *sequeloe*, not easy to forecast, when he declined to answer. I have no first-hand knowledge of these things of the West, as I have already said. I also reverently believe that "God fulfils himself in many ways", in infinite forms of beast [Page 18] and man and angel, in East and West and North and South; and that, therefore, it is not wise for the follower of any one way to condemn any other way, offhand and unreservedly. But I also see that God very often fulfils himself, in man, by yielding to evil temptations and then repenting and expiating and rising to good. Therefore it is not wise to blindly imitate other's ways either, without examining whether they are good for us or not. We know well that what is food for one may be poison for another, and *vice versa*. And for that very reason we have to judge with anxious care what is food and what is poison for us. In view, therefore, of such little knowledge, of Indian conditions only, as I happen to have, I cannot help praying most earnestly that India may be spared all such experiences, which, if they be facts, seem to be the result of individualism and selfishness run amuck.

Women seem to have been cruelly (shall we say ?), driven by the men into competition with men in the West, for "bread", for means of living, to begin with, and now the whole mental and moral atmosphere has changed, and Nemesis has come, and they are trying to do all the things that men are doing and strive against them and defeat them, in the battle of life, instead of nerving, heartening, vitalising them for

that battle. This is scarcely natural, from the Indian standpoint. It maximises the struggle, and minimises the alliance, for existence. [Page 19] Man seems intended by nature to do all the rougher and harder outside work of "bread-winning" and all the competitive battling of life; and woman to do the comparatively less hard and more affectionate work of "house-keeping" and "home-making", and reserve her vital powers for the great toil and travail of maternity, without which the race perishes, which builds up new life, and which need's far more persistent and patient and higher heroism to do so, than the sudden rushes of the battle-field, which only seek to destroy life.

MISCHIEVOUS CATCHWORDS

Some very false and very mischievous catchwords have become current, in consequence of the thoughtless speech and behaviour of foolish and arrogant men, who have been insulting and dishonoring womanhood, in the East as well as the West, about the "household drudgery" of women and the "dignified work" of men. Office-drudgery is no better than so-called household drudgery. Indeed, the truth is, that class for class, all "bread-winning and "money-making" and "vocational" and "professional" work, so-called highest or so-called lowest, is no less and no more either "drudgery" or "dignified work" for men, than the corresponding "house-keeping" is for women, whether the bread that is won or the house that is kept is a peasant's or a prince's. [Page 20]

Why is household work, even of the commonest kind, any more drudgery than incessant poring over small print and crabbed handwriting, or endless scratching of pen against paper, or clicking of type-writer; or perpetual talking in classroom, or court, or on platform; or listening from year's end to year's end to the tales of the quarrels of others, and recording limitless reels of largely manufactured evidence, and getting headaches, if conscientious, in trying to judge, mostly by guess-work, how much of that evidence is true and how much false; or bending double over the office-desk, morning, noon, and night; or sitting in a shop, and being at the beck and call of customers at all hours; or being shaken out of bed at midnight, after a hard day's work, to perform filth-involving operations for a patient suffering from an infectious disease and living in a slum; or worrying over the 'complex cares of state', and practising fair and foul tricks, and directing elaborate espionage, as politicians and statesmen, in order to circumvent each other; or jerking at machinery, for hours and hours together even on both sides of midnight, in night-relay work, to win a few more coins; or working mines, quarrying stones, stoking engines, fighting winds and waves; or mutilating and murdering each other in battles amidst indescribable horrors, wire-pulled like puppets by ruthless schemers, and hypnotised with Circean phrases about national patriotism — why is the most uninviting form of household work any [Page 21] more drudgery than doing all this, till the eyes are blinded, the back bent, the hair whitened or completely fallen out, the skin wrinkled prematurely, the chest flattened, the nerves broken, the digestion ruined, the whole soul sick with chewing paper and drinking ink and driving pen or wheel, or the mangled body drowned altogether in trench-mire and dirt and foulness ?

The fact is that only that work is drudgery, whatever its form and nature, which one is forced to do against one's will, which is uninteresting, unpleasant, excessive and exhausting; and all that work is dignified which is the opposite. [This portion is taken mostly from Bhagavan Das' *Social Reconstruction with special reference to Indian Problems*. (The Gyan Mandal Press. Benares).— A great violinist of Britain, who had given up just as she was beginning to make a name, told me that she had, had to practise for eight hours each night, night after night, in preparation for public performances. The result was that her not strong constitution had broken down and her two poor arms become almost paralysed. The fine art of

music had proved worse drudgery than even cooking and washing. Indeed, I do not know that, within limits, these are drudgery at all. Speaking for myself, I have often had occasion to regret that my culinary accomplishments do not extend beyond the making and the taking of tea and coffee and the washing up of the tea and coffee things; and these I find almost more pleasant than music; indeed, [Page 22] music is enjoyed best, ordinarily, *after* these! The fact is that the necessaries of life ought to be regarded as more beautiful and more "dignified" than the luxuries; and would be so regarded if social conditions were less artificial. But cooking and washing are not the only elements of household work. The beautifying of the home includes all fine arts; and the bubbling laughter and the absurd prattle of glad children is far sweeter music, and their healthy and happy faces and mobile features, perpetually expressing all kinds of comic and tragic emotions, passing in a second from dark rain to bright sunshine and back again, are far finer pictures, than any master of music, any Tān -sen or Mozart, any master of painting, any Chitra-lekhā or Titian, ever can produce — if only the mother knows, and she alone can know best, how to evoke them from these living toys of God, who are the climax of His supreme creative art. Nothing in any man's most "dignified work" even distantly approaches the heart-satisfying, heart-nourishing, quality of this aspect of "household drudgery".

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL VOCATION

It would be well, therefore, if girls were educated primarily for home-making, and all that it means. That this may be done successfully, men have, first to change their ways of thinking and speaking; they have to recognise, and to show that they recognise, [Page 23] that the mother's vocation is higher and more dignified than any masculine vocation, nay, is much more than dignified, is holy. In India, the woman has been made too long and too much to follow behind the man. In the West, she seems to be now going ahead, and trying to put him behind. The right middle course seems to be that the two should walk side by side on the path of life, each carrying the burden of his and her own peculiar duties, each prepared for life's discipline by special appropriate educational discipline.

DOMESTIC ECONOMY; DIETETICS; FINE ARTS

A very important part of women's special education is that they should be taught— and this is better done by the practice and the example of the teachers than by precept — that no household work, no so-called menial duty, is beneath dignity. They should also be diligently instructed — again by example even more than precept — that "high living and plain thinking" is a very dangerous rule to follow. To make a little go a long way is the very essence of the science and art of "domestic economy". It is well known that a little learning is a dangerous thing; and the growth of intelligence, especially when the education is mostly bookish and literary and intellectual, tends to breed false notions of dignity, in boys as well as girls; and such false notions, if not cured in time, mature into [Page 24] shallow conceit and arrogant *hauteur*, and become the source of much trouble, in human relations generally, and in home-making especially. The West has had to learn the "dignity of labor" by much painful conflict between the idle and the laborious. Girls should be instructed in "first aid", simple remedies for common ailments and accidents, and sick-nursing. A young lady, a near and dear relative of mine, who took a good degree in Samskrt, in an Indian University, tells me, now that she is married and the mother of children, that it would have been much better if the enormous time and trouble she spent on studying the *Siddhānta Kaumudī*, (a very large work on Samskrt Grammar) had been all spent on *Vaidyaka* (Medicine), especially Dietetics, to enable her, first to avoid, and next to deal with the ailments of her babies. The benefits of right diet reach very deep, very high, very far. (Manu, ii, 53-57; Gītā, xvii, 8-10).

The Chhāndogya Upanishat says:

"Pure food makes clean body and clear mind, whence sure memory and far insight and solution of all painful knots in the heart and complexes in the sub-conscious". Girls should be specially taught to make the home orderly and attractive and beautiful; [Page 25] but it should be demonstrated to them that the beautiful does not necessarily and always mean the expensive and the wasteful, but very often the reverse. The most costly brocade and shawl, if ill-cut and ill-worn, or the most fashionable and most expensive western fashions, are much less beautiful than a simple and clean *khaddar sari*, if artistically and gracefully wound around the body. It has been asked: Why should men prescribe dress to women, when women do not to men ? But according to a Hindi proverb,

they should do so, to each other. "Eat to please yourself, dress to please another", consistently with scientific hygiene, of course. Courses in the Fine Arts are very desirable, indeed indispensable. And I venture to remind my audience that the old Samskrt. Science of Domestic Happiness gives a fairly exhaustive list of sixty-four, amongst which, side by side with games and exercises that make for physical culture and the supple and shapely body, and the arts of music, painting, perfumery , etc., are included the spinning and weaving of fine yarn and cloth.

Anna-pūrnā includes Vastra- pūrnā. Special degrees might well be instituted for graduation in the Fine Arts, if degrees are very much wanted, as decorative 'additions', by the alumni. [Page 26]

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

And, finally, the spiritual quality of benevolence and the affectionate nature, and especially sweetness and gentleness, which are so natural to girls, should be carefully cultivated in them, as courage and courtesy should be in boys. I often remember, with much pleasure, and much faith also, the good old nursery rhymes, that girls are "sugar and spice, and all that's nice", while boys are "frogs and snails, and nasty dogs' tails". Any education which tends to make girls less nice than nature has made them, surely had much better have a heavy stone tied round its neck and be drowned in the deepest sea. This spiritual cultivation should be done by ennobling religious (not formalist) exercises, of *sandhyā* and *namāz* and prayer, and sacred hymns, and observances of festivals having a refining influence, and by other appropriate means of emotional education. Where the spiritual side and the gentler emotions have been fostered and developed, in youth and maid, both, the bonds of marriage and family-ties will be worn

eagerly as beautiful golden ornaments of the soul, throughout the life-time, and even after death — so the Hindu scriptures say, and the Muslim scriptures, too, as I have heard, and as I reverently believe. But where this has not been done, where life is wanted to be a series of picnics, and matrimony is not accepted reverently as an ennobling discipline, but, on the [Page 27] contrary, shallow conceit and arrogance and self-indulgence and such like coarser passions have been nursed and strengthened, there the bonds will rapidly turn from delicate and desired and beautifying chains of gold into intolerable fetters of iron, and the bright homestead will become a dark prison, and the divorce-court, and more lawless ways, will be sought as means of escape from it. I, as a primitive-minded Indian, cannot help thinking that persons educated without any spiritual quality having been brought to blossom in them, will not want any kind of civilisation, but, instead, will set civilisation back, will drag it into the dust and mire, will bring about much de-civilisation.

THE IDEAL OF THE GOOD HOME

The vast majority of women are intended by nature, and at heart prefer to be, not unmarried Misses Saraswati, but Grha-Lakshmi-s and Grha-Anna-pūrnās, goddesses of the family-home, whose very presence and companionship brings joy and strength into the life of their partners, and makes it possible, and worth while, for them to follow their special vocations successfully. The Indian ideal is that as Shakti is to Shiva, so is the good wife to the good husband. The very inconsequences of Shakti-Pārvati, and of her human embodiments, make the real drama of the vast Divine Family of the World, and of the world of the small human [Page 28] family, far more interesting than any artificial and professional theatrical play can be.

MANY TYPES OF HOMES

True, there are many types of marriage and of home and domesticity. Manu mentions eight forms of marriage, suitable for different temperaments. There are the *Gāndharva* and the *Rākshasa* forms, *i.e.*, marriage by mutual choice, and by capture. These are in keeping with the *rājasa* or *kshatriya* temperament. The *Gāndharva* form seems now to be mostly preferred by the Saxon races, in the West. There are other forms, *Brāhma*, *Prājāpatya*, *etc.*, in which the marriage is settled by the elders mostly. These are more suited to the *sāttvika* and (higher) *tāmāsa* or *brāhmaṇa* and *vaishya* temperaments. In the West, such forms are said to be in vogue among the Latin races. The Romans seem to have tried all these varieties, at different stages of their history. The Spartans seem to have preferred, at least in form, marriage by capture, under the laws of Lycurgus. The *Purānas* (*e.g.*, the *Shiva*) indicate different types of “domesticity” in terms of animals: the feline (tigers, cats, *etc.*), the lupine (wolves), the canine (dogs), the ursine (bears), the suiline (boars), the cervine (deer), the bovine (oxen), the columbine (doves, pigeons), the aquiline (eagles), *etc.*; also in terms of other and superior non-human races, as those of the [Page 29] artist Devas, the acting *Gāndharvas*, the dancing *Apsaras*, the singing *Kinnaras*, the many-skilled *Vidyādharas*, *etc.*, all mostly sterile, progenyless, and recruited in peculiar ways. All such temperaments, animal and ethereal, are to be found in the human kingdom which seems to be the meeting-point of all kingdoms, high and low. We, therefore find many forms of marriage and very various types of domesticity amongst men.

THE MOST SUITABLE TYPE FOR INDIA

But after making all due allowance for variations and exceptions, the type and ideal most suitable for the large majority of at least Indian mankind and womankind today seems to be the *Ardha-Nār-Ishvara*, Gauri-Shankara ideal, wherein husband and wife, "the twain, are one", in the words of Manu and Christ. and wherein they are all in all to each other.

Dasharatha says of Kausalyā,

(Rāmāyana, Aranya, ch. 12.)

Shakuntalā says to Dushyanta,

(Mahā-bhārata, Ādi-parva, ch. 98.)

[Page 30] Aja, mourning for his wife Indumati, says,

(Raghu-vamsha, ch. 8.)

All which means that "the two spouses are, to each other, not only husband and wife, but also friend and friend, brother and sister, father and daughter, son and mother, sovereign and councillor, teacher and pupil". All relationships spring out of, and all spiritual affections and all physical emotions and passions obviously find expression and play in, this primal relation of Purusha and Prakrti. And those homes secure more permanent happiness for themselves which cultivate the spiritual affections more diligently than the sensuous emotions.

The ideal of the good home must therefore be made the most prominent feature in girls' education.

**THE MAHA-MANGALA SUTTA —
BUDDHA'S SERMON OF THE GREATEST BLESSING**

Perhaps the noblest sermon that the Buddha, one of the wisest teachers of mankind, ever preached, after experience of abandoning home and finding Nirvāna, is a eulogy of the good home. As the old books tell us in a pretty story, once upon a time, the Enlightened One, full of great pity for all sufferers, sat in the garden of a loved and loving disciple, meditating how to help the world. And [Page 31] angels came and gathered there and stood respectfully in a corner. And the whole place was bright with the Lord's aura and the radiance of the angels. And the angels were good and beautiful in mind and body, and eagerly inquisitive as children. I should like to believe that some of them have incarnated as my dear sisters and daughters here. When the Lord opened his eyes, the most forward of the angels came up to him bravely, and made a reverent bow with folded palms, and said to him, "Sir, many angels and many men desirous of improving themselves, have pondered what the blessings of life are. We are not quite satisfied with what they say. Please, therefore, tell us yourself what is the greatest good in life, the very greatest blessing".

And the Buddha smiled and said.

To follow the ways of the wise, and not those of the unwise, and to honor those that deserve to be honored — this is the greatest blessing. To live in a pleasant and fertile land which yields nourishment readily, to do good work, to have all of rectitude, to gather varied knowledge, to be skilled in some art, to be self-controlled, to speak courteously and truly — this is the greatest blessing. To honor father and mother, to cherish spouse and child, to follow an honest calling, to give to the deserving to help kinsmen, to do blameless deeds — this is the greatest blessing. To shun all vice and sin, to abstain from intoxicating drugs and drinks, to observe the laws of righteousness — this is the greatest blessing. Dignity without pride, contentment with gratitude for the smallest help received, doing the right thing at the right time and in the right place — this is the greatest blessing. To be forgiving and gentle, to associate with the good, to converse on subjects that elevate and purify the mind — [Page 32] this is the greatest blessing. Finally, to gain insight into the four great Truths, i.e., of Pain, of the Cause of Pain, of the Remedy for Pain, and of the Ceasing of Pain, and thus to realise Nirvana, to stand with soul unshaken amidst the strokes of life, unsorrowing, unsullied, serene — this is the greatest blessing.

This is the Buddha's answer, in part, to the question: "What sort of civilisation should we want ? "

THE MANU'S EXALTATION OF THE MOTHER

The writers of the Purānas have said similar things:



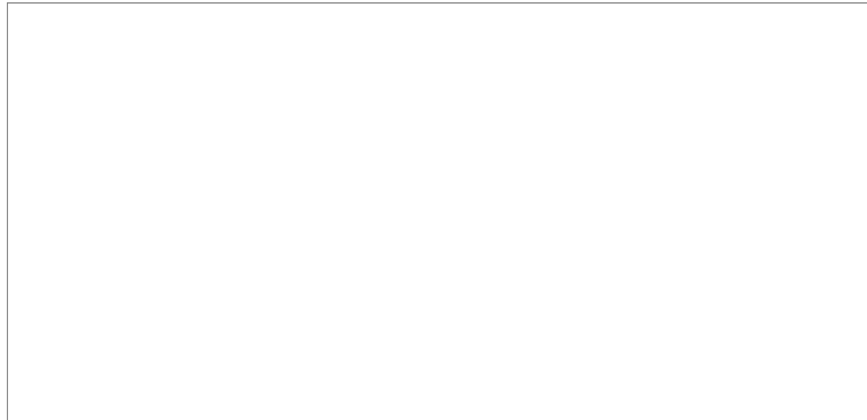
“Where the members of the family rejoice in each other, there God rejoices.” Muhammad has said: *Al jannato taha'a qadam il, umm*; “Heaven spreads forth beneath the feet of mothers”.

And other Sages of Islam have said similar things.

Gar tajalli khās khwāhi surate insān bi bin;
Zāt-i-Haq rā āshkārā andarun khandān bi bin.

Wouldst thou behold God's beauty manifest?
Call forth a smile upon thy brother's face.

The mother-hearted Patriarch and first law-giver of this land, the Manu, yearning for the welfare of his progeny, places before them the same ideal of the home, as the heart of all civilisation; and his repeated injunctions of the pre-eminence of [Page 33] the house-holder's order above all other orders in society are unqualified:



Where women are honored, the gods rejoice. Where they are not honored, the family perishes. The teacher of the higher knowledge exceedeth ten teachers of the lower knowledge in the title to respect; the father exceedeth him a hundred times; but the mother exceedeth the father a thousand times in the weighty virtue of educator (*gaurava, guru-tā*) and the right to reverence. The order of the householder supports all other orders, even as the air supports all living things, and the mother is the heart of the house-hold.

The mother is the incarnation of self-sacrifice for the younger generation. She is the living Jesus Christ in every family, within the limits of that family. The worship of the mother and the child, of Kausalyā and Rāma, of Yashodā and Krshna, of Yashodharā and Rāhula, of Kwannon and child, of Madonna and Babe, of Fatima and Hasan-Husain, is the most sincere part of every religion.

THE MOTHER THE ONE REDEEMER

It is bad enough that men are selfish and vicious; but that women should also become selfish would [Page 34] abolish goodness from the world and bring about chaos. In their own interests men should take care not to become so bad that they make it impossible for the better half of humanity, the Mother-half, which is the one and only Redeemer of man's primal fall into the sin of selfishness, to avoid becoming selfish and bad also. If any men are the salt of the earth, the mother everywhere is the sweetness; and if that sweetness lose its savour, wherewith shall life be sweetened? The nation which flouts the sacredness of the home, despises domestic affection, and thinks more of the means than of the end; which exalts the public servant above the public, the expert as such above the layman as such, and gives greater importance to the office, the shop, the court, the factory, than to the home; which does not sublimate its psychical and physical appetites into the service of the True, the Beautiful, the Good, but drags these down into the service of the appetites; which takes more joy in lust and hate and greed and pride than in benevolence; which does not honor the mother and fails to sanctify motherhood — that nation is turning its Gauri-s into Kāli-s, its Lakshmi-s and Anna-purnā-s, into Chandi-s and Bhairavi-s, its Ceres into Furies, its Vestals into Maenads and Bacchantes, its Shiva-s and Shankara-s into Rudra-s, its archangels into devils, its Azaziels into Satans, its Rahim-s and Razzāq-s and Ghaffār-s into [Qabhar-s?] and Jabbār-s and Mumit-s; that nation [Page 35] is rushing along the downward road to moral and physical death.

But the nation which cherishes and honors the mothers, and sanctifies motherhood, and reveres it as holy and precious, not with the lips only, but in heart and deed, that nation will never be degraded, and will never perish, but will ever rise from high to higher heights. The sentiment which is dearest to the Indian heart, and wells up from it instinctively and rightly, therefore, as the national cry, is *Vande Mātaram*, "Reverent Salutation to the Mother", not to man as man, not to woman as woman, but to woman as mother.

I can pray for no greater blessing, and offer no better advice, than this, which I pray for and offer with all my heart, that the alumni of this Institution may hold high the ideal of Noble and Sacred Motherhood, and mould the head and the heart of the successive generations so that they shall revere Beauty of body and soul, and Truth which includes Courage, and Goodness which means Justice as well as Charity and Self-sacrifice, and see in the Mother, and make the Motherland, the embodiment of them all.

