

### 13. House and home

Your Vice-Chancellor Gokak spoke in very charming Kannada, as is his wont, since he is a poet and writer in that language. I too shall speak in that language, though I usually speak only in Telugu at such gatherings; pay attention to the matter, rather than the style, for, I speak to you of spiritual disciplines which will grant you lasting benefit.

*Bhaaratheeya Samskrithi* (India's Culture) has *Prapanchavyaapthi* (World-wide spread) since it can correct and canalise the human emotions and motives along healthy productive routes. It is sacred and basic and it can establish peace and joy in the hearts of all. It seeks to strike roots into life through the mothers, and children on their laps. Women have been its custodians and promoters; men have a secondary role. And, among women, you girl students, who will be the leaders of women in the coming days, the examples which all women wish to emulate, must understand and practise this culture, so that it may be preserved and it may flourish. The keenness to acquire education is now very evident among the daughters of the nation and so, great hope can be placed on them, in this field of reconstruction. Education must be for life, not for a living. Women have proved throughout the centuries in Indian History that they have the courage, the vision, and the intelligence needed to dive into the depths of spiritual science and discipline. Maithreyi, Meera, Gargi, Sulabha, Choodala, Mahaadhevi, Aandal, are standing examples of the mighty heroines of the spiritual adventure into the realms of God-realisation.

#### **Reject the riches and seek the Reality instead**

Woman has been extolled in ancient scriptures as well as classical poetry as *Grihalakshmi*, the Goddess of Prosperity in the Home. She is the *Dharmapathni* (the companion in virtue of the husband) in the fulfilment of the duties and rights of wedded life as a householder. While learning home science, you may be getting trained in the art of making the home happy and full of harmony and health. You have to learn also how to steer clear of hatred, malice, greed, anger, anxiety, pride and other obstacles that come in the way of inner peace. It is not enough if the home budget is balanced; the wife (and the mother) must learn the art of having a balanced view of life, which will not be affected by triumphs and troubles, gains or losses, victory or defeat. This balance can be got only by reliance on God, faith in the in-dwelling God. Thyaagaraaja sang of the dilemma that faces every one, when confronted with riches on the one hand and the Inner Reality of God on the other. Thyaagaraaja rejected riches and sought the Reality, instead.

One discipline you must heed, namely, the control of the senses; if you give them free rein, they will drag you into calamity. Education must render you monarch of your talents, your tools for acquiring knowledge. The eye, the ear, the tongue are like wild horses that have no bit between the teeth; learn the art of *dhyana* by which the senses can be controlled and the will directed inwards, towards the mastery of feelings and emotions. A nation that has no bridle on its sensuality can never thrive or survive.

You are mastering what is called 'Home Science'; but, what is a home? How is it different from a house? The home is filled with love, with the sacrifice that love involves, the joy that love radiates, and the peace that love imparts. The brick and mortar structure where parents and children spend their lives is not a home; children do not yearn for it, parents do not find peace therein!

### **Make the shrine room the centre of your home**

Many educated women have converted the home into a hotel, what with the cook, the maali (the gardener), the servants, the *aayah* (nursery maid), the bearer, the chauffeur who clutter the whole place! She is just a scintillating doll, darting in and through the rooms; she is often a millstone round the neck of the husband, whom she leads about and lords over, to his utter discomfiture. She engages herself in spending money, shopping for things of her wayward fancy, in order to keep up social appearances; she idles away the time in lazy lounging and medicating herself for imaginary illness. She becomes a burden on her spouse and children.

The centre of every home must be the shrine room; the fragrance of flower and incense emanating from there must pervade the home and purify it. The mother must set the example in making the shrine the heart of the household. She must enforce discipline over the children in personal cleanliness, in humility and hospitality, in good manners and acts of service. She must persuade the children by example and precept to revere elders and to allot some time both in the morning and evening for prayer, and for silent meditation.

The shrine room has to be kept clean and consecrated; special festival days marked out in each religion, should be observed, so that the significance will impress the young minds. However self-centred and haughty the husband is, by systematic regulation of the domestic time-table, with worship of God as its focal point, the man can be made to realise how a God-centred Home is home of peace and joy. He too will soon fall in and be a pillar of faith.

### **Learn the effect of different types of food on character**

The mother herself should look after the children during the early years; if the child is handed over to servants and *aayahs*, it will learn their habits of living and speech and will weep only when they die, not when the mother dies! For, the child starts loving the *aayah* more than the mother, who has shoved them on to another as a nuisance and a bother! The mother must herself prepare food for the home; for, food that is prepared with love and served with a smile is much more sustaining and strengthening than food cooked by a hired woman and served by a disgruntled refractory kitchen boy!

I am glad cookery and nutrition are included in your syllabus; I smell even here, while on the dias, some dishes being got ready in your culinary laboratory! Your knowledge of cookery reaches far, I must admit! The constituents of a tasty dish attract the senses and titillate them, no doubt. But, I hope you learn also about the distinction between the *Saathwik* (calmness promoting), the *Raajasik* (emotion producing) and the *Thaamasik* (sloth encouraging) types of food and of the effect of these on character. The mind is the key to health and happiness and so, food must be so chosen that it does not affect the mind adversely; along with *Saathwik* food, the mind must also be given special diet like *Dhyaana*, *Japa*, *Naamasmarana*, etc. to keep it sound and steady.

### **Home is the temple where the family is nurtured**

The status of the mother in the home is one of authority; now, even colleges like this, try to train up only the Wife, not the Mother. The Home for which science caters here is the home where the wife rules, not where the mother spreads her affection and shapes the future of the country and its culture! Let the children, even grown-up boys and girls, touch the feet of the father and mother every morning, before the daily tasks are started; it will generate a reverential atmosphere in the home. Five minutes in the shrine room and the *namaskaaram* (prostration) for parents---let

this be the daily routine. The *Upanishads* recommend this as the basic requirements of our culture. *Maathru dhevo bhava; Pithru dhevo bhava; Aacharya dhevo bhava!*

The home is the temple where the family, each member of which is a moving temple, is nurtured and nourished. The mother is the high priest of this House of God. Humility is the incense with which the house is filled. Reverence is the lamp that is lit, with love as the oil and faith as the wick. Spend the years of your lives, dedicating them for such worship, in the homes that you will found. I bless you that through your faith and strength, devotion and dedication may increase in this land.

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