

13. Heroic mothers and noble sons

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! For the benefit of others alone trees give fruits, rivers carry water and cows yield milk. Likewise the human body is given for rendering help to others. But not recognizing this truth, man uses his body for selfish purposes. Man today behaves in a more degraded manner than trees, rivers and cows.

Man is forgetting the purpose for which he has been endowed with a body.. From dawn to dusk, he is immersed ,wholly in selfish pursuits. He has no comprehension of what selflessness means. Man considers the phenomenal world as the only reality.

People mistake the unreal for the real

and the real for the unreal.

But the real is the only One

And there is nothing else in the universe.

This visible universe is made up of three *gunas* (*Sathva, Rajas and Thamas*). This is the reason for describing the cosmos as *Sthree*. The term *Sthree* has three components: "Sa", "Tha" and "Ra". "Sa" signifies *the Saathvik* quality. This comprises qualities like forbearance, compassion, and love. "Tha" signifies 'the *Thamo guna* which includes qualities like modesty, bashfulness, fear and patience. "Ra" signifies the *Rajo guna* represented by such qualities as courage, sacrifice and the adventurous spirit. Every being born in the world has only feminine qualities. Merely on the basis of the physical form, a distinction is made between men and women. The three qualities in the term *Sthree* are to be found both in men and women.

Role of the mother

The term *Sthree* should not be treated lightly. The Bhagavath Geetha lists seven attributes to the feminine principle' Fame, Wealth, Speech, Wisdom, Intelligence, Fortitude and Determination. The Mother principle, which embodies these seven potencies, is highly sacred. Wherever you turn, you will see manifestations of the feminine principle in Nature.' When any person goes abroad, the first question that is put is: "What is your Mother-tongue?" No one asks, "What is your Father-tongue?" This shows how much- importance is attached to the role of the mother. The mother, fosters the child in the womb and goes through all travails to protect the child. There is no greater love in the world than maternal love. Hence the ancients accorded the highest honour to the mother and declared: "*Maathru dhevo bhava*" (Esteem the Mother as Divine) and. "*Pithru dhevo bhava*" (Esteem the father as Divine). For every person the first preceptor is the mother. It is from the mother that a child learns its first words of speech, the first steps in movement and many other primary lessons in behaviour. Hence, the mother stands out as the reflected image of *Prakrithi* (Nature).

Heroic women in Indian history

Despite the evidences of recognition of the greatness of the feminine principle, women have been described as *abala* (the weaker vessel). This appellation is applied to women because of the secondary status accorded to women in the performance of *yagnas* (sacrifice) and other rituals, though participation together with men was permitted. Women could not perform sacrifices and rituals by themselves. Even charitable and religious acts could be performed by women only in

association with their spouses.

Though the term *abala* is applied to women in this specific context alone, women are not weak at all in terms of strength or ability. We have innumerable examples of the strength displayed by women in the world. As against three potencies attributed to men, women are said to have seven potencies (according to the Geetha). Can you call as weak Saavithri, who made the Lord of Death restore to life her dead husband? Can Anasuuuya, who transformed the Divine Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva into three babies and played with them, be called an *abala* (weak woman)? Sumathee was a great lady who stopped the sun from rising, because her husband was predestined to die the next morning. Could she be termed as *abala*? No. Was Dhraupadhi, who bore with fortitude for 14 years all the ordeals her husbands went through, a weak woman? Can Seetha, who shared with Raama all hardships of life in the forest and achieved ultimate victory, be called weak? Can Gaargi, who could carry on the debate with the *Raaja yogi* Janaka is a dauntless spirit, be called a weak woman?

There are any number of such heroic women in recorded history. Though physically women may appear weak, in reality they are full of strength. As the embodiment of the three gunas, women are endowed with exceptional strength. Even in the spiritual field women display their boundless capacity.

Gratitude to the mother

It is in her role as mother that there is the highest expression of a woman's strength. Every child that is born owes its existence to the mother. Hence everyone should be extremely grateful to one's mother.

The mother is the symbol of the Universal mother and father of the Dime Lord. There is a popular prayer in Sanskrit describing the Lord as everything:

*Oh Lord of Lords !
You are my mother and father,
My kinsman and friend,
My wealth and knowledge,
My everything.*

The mother is the first teacher of speech. The first words taught to the child are *Amma, Appa* (mother, father). Then the teaching of the alphabet starts. The first lessons are: "*Om Namah Shivaaya*" or "*Om Namo Naaraayanaaya*." The teaching of language begins with the teaching of names of the Divine - Shiva and Naaraayana. In ancient times, the mother occupied the place of the first preceptor for the child. Unfortunately, in the world today, what are the parents teaching to the child? They are teaching them "A, B, C, D." Nor is that all. They go on to teach the child some meaningless stuff like: "Baa Baa black sheep!" (laughter). The mothers imagine that they are teaching something wonderful to the children. This is wrong. Teaching of the alphabet should begin with learning the names of the Lord.

Ancient mothers taught Truth and Righteousness

This was the way the mothers in ancient Bhaarath taught their children. The ancient teachings exhorted the people "*Sathyam vadha, Dharmam chara*" (Speak the Truth, adhere to

Righteousness). No mother taught the child to speak untruth. No mother would think of asking the child to follow unrighteousness. Their sole desire was to see that their children secured happiness by leading worthy and meritorious lives. Hence, in the attitude towards parents, the children should give the primary place to the mother.

Today, we need to promote such ideal mothers. This is all the more necessary because the modern trends are disturbing. The tendency (among the affluent families) is to entrust the child from birth to a nurse or an *ayah*. The child does not get the love of the mother. The child has no knowledge of what a mother means.

In ancient times, Queen Madhaalasa was teaching the children from their infancy the greatness of *Vairaagya* (detachment). She used to sing a lullaby while putting the children to sleep:

*Placing you in the cradle of Omkaara
On the bed of the great saying 'Thath vam asi'
Swinging to the music of Awareness, dear child,
May the Gods lull you to sleep!*

*The four Vedhas are the
four chains of the cradle.
May your heart be filled with
the nine forms of devotion.*

Because the mothers in ancient times filled the child with devotion and detachment, Bhaarith stood out as a land of sacrifice, of wisdom, of yoga and contentment. Because today mothers do not bring up the child in this spirit, this sacred land is ceasing to be one of sacrifice and is becoming a pleasure-loving nation. The pleasures are turning into breeders of disease. Sacrifice in ancient times made this country the *Yogabhumi* (land of *yoga*). Our goal should be to become yogis, not *rogis* (victims of disease).

There may be bad sons but bad mothers are rare

Embodiments of Divine love! You must be prepared to make even the supreme sacrifice for showing your gratitude to the mothers. Even the *avataars* Raama, Krishna and others, owed their advent to their mothers. Everyone should pray for sacred mothers who will bring forth good children. There may be bad sons in the world but bad mothers are rare. Most mothers today lament over the bad behaviour of their children. No son who has caused distress to his mother can come to anything good. The Telugu saying is: "There can be no prosperity in a home where the mother sheds tears." Today we need sons who will please their mothers.

The mothers, for their part, should teach the children always to speak the truth. When a mother asks the son, "Where have you been?" he should not prevaricate. He must tell the truth and confess his mistakes if he has done anything wrong. Very few children tell the truth to their parents today. Of what use is education for such children?

Today's boys and girls are the future redeemers of the nation. Hence, the parents should bring them up on right, lines so that they may be ideal citizens.

Women in various places observe what is called Ladies' Day. The day should not be observed only by making speeches or holding bhajans. They should endeavour to help the poor and the destitute. Helpless women who have no means of livelihood should be taught some occupation like tailoring to enable them to earn an income. Slum dwellers should be helped to keep their huts dean. The environment also should be cleaned to help the children grow in a pure atmosphere. Proper housekeeping should also be taught to those people. Disease is caused mainly by unhygienic surroundings Moreover the air, the water, the mind, everything is polluted. This pollution is causing several, new types of diseases.

Example of Vidhyaasaagar

In the past, mothers used to play a big part in moulding their children. For instance, there is the example of Eeshvar Chandhra Vidhyaasaagar. He was a native of Calcutta. He justified his name by being a great scholar (Vidhyaasaagar means ocean of knowledge). He belonged to a very poor family. His mother brought up her son at the expense of her own food. Pursuing his studies under the most adverse circumstances, he completed his education and found a job on a salary of Rs. 50 per mensem. In due course, he rose to an eminent position by dint of hard work.

One day he approached his mother and said: "Mother, I have reached an eminent position thanks to your blessings and guidance. I am now able to fulfill any of your wishes." The mother said: "Not yet, my son. I have three desires but I shall tell them in due course." Reaching a still higher position after sometime, Eeshvar Chandhra renewed his appeal to his mother. The mother said: "Our village is poor and the village has no school. Please set up a school here so that the children will not have to go outside for their education. That school will be an ornament for me." The son carried out her wish.

Later, the mother revealed her second wish. She wanted Eeshvar Chandhra to set up a small hospital in the village to serve the villagers. She said this would be her second ornament she wanted from him. He set up a hospital as desired by his mother. In the following years, Vidhyaasaagar rose to greater eminence, but remained as humble and free from conceit as ever. He asked his mother what her third desire was. She said that he would build a small rest house (choultry) for travellers passing through the village to stay. Vidhyaasaagar built a small community hall in the village.

Today's educated persons get puffed up over their petty educational attainment. It was his mother's teachings which made Vidhyaasaagar practise humility.

Not penance, not rituals, not pilgrimages

Are of any avail in crossing

The ocean of human existence.

Only service to the good

Can take one across. (Sanskrit shloka).

Service is most important, It helps to promote humility and to further the oneness of mankind. No room should be given for ostentation. True devotion is free from exhibitionism.

Children should recognise the supremacy of maternal love, which is equal to Divine Love. Revere and love the mother. That is the meaning of Mother's Day. The parents are living

symbols of God. Children must make them happy.

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The most direct method of achieving spiritual success is Nishkaama karma, action without any attention or attachment to 'the fruit therefrom, action as duty, action as dedication, action as worship.

Baba