

BEYOND GENDER GAMES

THE FELLOWSHIP OF WOMEN AND MEN

Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari

**Translated by
S.S.Pandharipande**



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About The Author

Shankar Trimbak Dharmadhikari, better known as Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari, was born on June 18th, 1899 at Multapi in Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. He studied at the Indore Christian College, Indore and the Morris College, Nagpur. He left college in the second year to join the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. He did not go back to any educational institution after that but spent a year studying the vedantic treatises of Shri Sankaracharya.

His wife, Damayantibai Dharmadhikari took part in the individual Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement in 1942. She was imprisoned twice.

From 1931 to 1935 he taught at the Tilak Vidyalaya, Nagpur. From 1935 to 1946 he lived in Bajajwadi, Wardha and was connected with the Gandhi Seva Sangh. From 1938 to 1943 he edited *Sarvodaya*, the Hindi organ of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. Member of the historic Provincial Legislative Assembly and the Constituent Assembly from 1946 to 1951, he was president of the Kaladi Sarvodaya Sammelan, Kerala in 1957. He also edited the Hindi weekly, *Bhoodan Yagna*.

He was actively connected with the organization of youth and students and worked for social reforms. He founded the Rashtriya Yuvak Sangh in the Central Provinces. Dada Dharmadhikari was awarded the Gandhi Award of the Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti for his contribution to Hindi literature. He took part in every movement launched by Gandhiji and was imprisoned in 1930, 1932 and 1942. Acharya Dada Dharmadhikar passed away on 1st December 1985 at Sewagram in Wardha District.

Publisher's Note

Vinoba Bhave, who was one of the mentors of the author, Dada Dharmadhikari, used to call this the Age of Friendship. In the post-communism era this makes more sense than the age of comradeship where everyone was equal but without individuality. Shankar Trimbak Dharmadhikari was at the forefront of the Sarvodaya movement. *Sarvam* means all and *udaya* means holistic emergence. Sarvodaya stands for the Gandhian ideal of holistic development for all humanity. In addition to this Dada Dharmadhikari was steeped in the ancient wisdom of the Upanishads and Western liberal thought.

In this book, *Beyond Gender Games: The Fellowship of Women and Men*, he has brought this rich personal perspective to bear on the complex issue of man-woman relationships. However, what the author calls 'pure thought' powers the book. That is, it is independent of the personality of the author and its veracity does not depend on the person from whom it originates. It does not reflect rigid ideologies or isms, but is harmonious.

So even if we keep aside the towering personality of the author who was one of the many liberal and original thinkers who bloomed in the inspiring pre and post-independence eras, what he says about the fellowship of men and women has a ring of authenticity.

Men and women without each other are savages. To the ancient concept of *ardh-narishwar* he brings a liberal definition. He reminds us that a woman dominated world would be as bad as a male dominated world. We do not want a feminist nightmare of he-women. A woman will be truly free only when she stops seeking the protection of man and becomes fearless.

Dada dharmadhikari was a social philosopher and free thinker who was also active in public life. He had the rare ability to convey patently unorthodox ideas in an easy and simple style laced with a sense of humour. All his efforts were aimed at inspiring others to think. His analyses have contemporary relevance to what can broadly be described as human values. This book is a sincere attempt to shift the balance of power to the individual. Not to the man or the woman. But to the real individual behind gender stereotypes.

We are thankful to Prof.S.S.Pandharipande for translating this book from the original Marathi. Prof.Pandharipande was closely associated with Dada for several years and it can be safely said that the translation is faithful to the spirit and language of the original. We are thankful to the Sarvodaya Ashram, Nagpur and to the Kamal Nayan Bajaj Trust for financial assistance, which has enabled us to keep the price of the book within the reach of a wider readership.

The cover has been designed by Kirti Trivedi. The red and white colours used in the cover symbolise female and male principles in the Indian tantrik tradition. Ardhanarishwar or Narnari Nateshwar in Indian symbology represents Lord Shiva as Bhava and Bhavani representing both the male and the female energy integrated into one personhood.

FOREWORD

These lectures were given mainly with the belief that the extension of the familistic spirit into society would lead to a meaningful freedom for the woman in social life. Here, the woman-man relationship has not been dealt with comprehensively, or in all its aspects. Perhaps that kind of consideration has, indeed, become imperative today in the present situation. These lectures primarily consider the woman as an individual. It is necessary, fundamentally, for the autonomous life of a woman to analyse how she, as a woman, is related to man, and how he, as a man, enters into a relationship with the woman. Among animals such a relationship is natural, and, therefore, regulated by biological laws. But, this kind of relationship between woman and man is as much voluntary as it is biological. There is a strong feeling among modern, educated young boys and girls that this (the biological) relationship should have no restrictions or limits. We are witness to the unprecedented and cataclysmic consequences resulting from this strong aspiration in our social life. There are signs that the very foundation of the institutions of marriage and family might crumble. This promiscuity is allergic to the institution of marriage or any blood

relationship. The widespread explosion of this tendency through educational institutions all over the world is not an ordinary matter. We will not be able to forestall its consequences upon the life of the future generations merely by ignoring or condemning it. The consequences of this promiscuity on the life of the woman too cannot be allayed by an attitude of charitable and noble indifference.

Man : Not a Means of Enjoyment

The fundamental premise of human fellowship is that one man shall not regard another man as a means of satisfying his lust or enjoyment. Such an attitude and attempt, in the economic field, of turning another individual into a tool of one's enjoyment, leads to inhuman exploitation. The same in the political field results in slavery and, in the field of religion, in a diabolical custom like untouchability. If women and men choose to regard each other as mere means of satisfying their carnal lust, then such an attitude is bound to lead to a disastrous exploitation on the sexual level. And, in view of the growing tendency of wanton licentiousness or promiscuity, it will be dangerous to neglect it. This tendency will definitely vitiate a woman's relationship with woman and man's with man. In fact, there are obvious signs, for anyone to see, of such a thing happening.

Respect for Restraint

I am not qualified enough to analyse this problem comprehensively and in depth, nor am I inclined to do so today. But I would like to sound a warning regarding the autonomous life of a woman. Free sex is more likely to affect the woman's status harmfully, than the man's. In connection with woman-man relationship, there is a fundamental difference between their status. A willingness and ability on the part of man is indispensable; but that is not necessarily the case with the woman. But, the consequences of the act are inevitably suffered by the woman. There is always the possibility of unwanted motherhood being thrust upon her. She might then consider motherhood not as a blessing and a glory, but as a curse and a punishment. She will then avoid it at all costs. If children are alienated from their married parents, the cultural value of parental affection will wither away in society. They will not receive the sweet and tender

protection of the mother. Thanks to modern medicine, a woman is successfully able to avoid the catastrophe of motherhood. Even then her body is bound to be affected in many ways. Hence, she must not be subjected to outrage or molestation in any situation whatsoever. This advocacy of honour is definitely not inspired by an outdated, fossilised, sterile or traditional morality. Modern youth have a tendency to break the shackles of these moral inhibitions. Let us neither hail nor condemn this tendency here. We are concerned with the concept of limits in respect of a woman's life. Honour is that restraint in behaviour which naturally grows out of one's concern for and interest in the other. There is no suppression here. Suppression is what one is compelled to do out of social dread, fear of the elders or under the duress of some oath or vow. Suppression weakens character and stunts personality. Mutuality is perverted. In honour, there is not an iota of mutual fear and suspicion. Honour is the name of that natural restraint emerging in the conduct of both woman and man, thanks to the concern and reverence they would feel for each other's individuality. It is, therefore, a question of life and death for the woman as to how her modesty and honour will be protected and nourished in the free relationship envisaged by modern social revolutionaries, boys as well as girls. Any violation of these twin limits of a woman's life will spell the death of her soul. The issue is so relevant that it must be considered.

Great Women Must Ponder On the Issue

However well-intentioned and charitable a man may be, it hardly seems probable that he would suggest an adequate solution to this problem. We have in our society today, many great women who have made humanity proud and who are hailed as gurus or leaders in spiritual, educational, social and political fields. However, this issue has not yet attracted their attention. This exposition expects that these women study and ponder over this vital issue in the life of the woman. They may bring to bear upon it a broad, impartial and intrinsically humanistic perspective.

Krishna-Draupadi, Krishna-Arjun

The discussion in these lectures encounters one more limitation. The main view in this analysis is that a woman should be able to work

shoulder to shoulder with a man in the social life outside of the family. That is to say the discussion here is chiefly centred on the mutual fellowship of woman and man and the sexual relationship between the two has not been the primary concern. In this regard, I thought of an easy, practical solution, viz., the extension into our social life, of the relationships and values of our family life, the only exception being the relationship of husband and wife. In this connection, some young, highly enlightened women of impeccable character drew my attention to an important point. "The institution of marriage, however ideal, is nevertheless born out of the sexual relationship and sustains itself on the basis of blood relationship. In the family, the status of the woman as mother is bound to be subsidiary. No emotional sublimation of the family can alter this fact. A woman cannot be a mother without being a wife. This situation turns the family, from the woman's point of view into a dignified incarceration in a fort, if not a decrepit prison house. Therefore, your ruse to extend into the social organisation the relationship in the family—which you regard as ideal does not appear to be in any way revolutionary from the woman's point of view as we see it. Instead of weakening, it indirectly strenghtens the feeling of difference between woman and man. A man and another man or a woman and another woman can easily be friends. They have no need to be cautious of each other. Love does not need any extraneous conditions. The friendship between two individuals brooks no limitation. It is friendship that reflects the most unconditional and selfless love in human life. We do not find such untainted friendships in the family. In fact in seeking, as you do, to introduce the conditions of family relationships into (social) fellowship, you are actually enfeebling its sacredness." This is the essence of what they feel and say.

Their objections compelled me to think. I could grasp the point. So far I have referred to only three symbols : Sita-Ram, Radha-Krishna and Krishna-Draupadi. Of these, the relationship of Sita and Ram is that of wife and husband and, hence, can be limited only to the family. The relationship between Radha and Krishna is neither familistic nor social. It can be limited only to individuals. That relationship in the world of today is likely to develop into the relationship of the lover and his fiancée. Therefore, I took as ideal the relationship between Krishna and Draupadi. But, even here, Krishna and Draupadi had to accept the prop of family relationship. The friendship between Krishna

and Arjun did not need that prop. True, they were related through blood. But having transcended that basis they established between them the relationship of pure friendship. This is pure unmarried fellowship, the establishment of such a relationship of mutual affection is free from lust and sensuality, between woman and man. Their status, from the standpoint of humanhood is bound to be flawed; and the status of the woman will definitely be subordinate. The objection of the girls gave me this insight. A profound sense of fulfilment overwhelmed me. But finally it is they who can find out a solution to his problem. It is not for me to do so. As per my ability I have, in these lectures suggested a middle path. The remaining should be added by Dharma, *Shesham dharmen poorayet*.

- Dada Dharmadhikari

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In memoriam...

A profound reflection must have preceded this exposition about women in Dada's heart. This reflection was mainly inspired, directly or indirectly, by one individual – Damayantibai Dharmadhikari – Dada's wife and our mother. As ill luck would have it, she suffered from a cerebral pathological disorder (due to three years imprisonment during Individual Satyagraha and Quit India movement) and, for all practical purposes, her social life came to an end. But, momentary flashes of intelligent consciousness remained in her life. This book is dedicated to those moments that reflect the very essence, the love and strength of motherhood and womanhood.

Publisher

1

The Foundation of Fellowship

A craving for companionship, a desire to live together is the foundation of fellowship. Mere psychological proximity does not give satisfaction. We need physical proximity as well. And we seek it. The joy and fragrance of life blooms in companionship. Every flower that blooms in a garden has its distinctive fragrance. Similarly in life, people who live around us have a distinctive aroma about them. Sometimes it is pleasant; at other times it is disagreeable. We like to stay on only where the smell is sweet. Women have a fragrance of their own. As a mother, as a sister, as a daughter, as a wife and as a friend, a woman fills the atmosphere with a sweet odour. The company of man too has its own fragrance. This is why every man longs for the company of another man, every woman craves the friendship of another woman and, men and women eagerly seek each other's company. This eagerness is the foundation of fellowship or 'living together.'

Man abhors loneliness. So far, only two types of human beings have craved isolation; the saints and the ascetics among the yogis,

and the pleasure-seekers and the sensuous among women. Both these types of people looked upon any kind of proximity or contact as a contagious disease. In fact, they saw all contact as contagion. In essence, contact does not necessarily mean an embrace. A contact can be established even by a look or through an intense feeling in the heart. I remember how, when my father was suffering from tuberculosis, he only wished that I remain near him, in the same house. Just this contact was enough for him. Such a contact is basically an emotional touch.

A Desire For Contact: Its Sanctity

However, man is not always satisfied merely by an implicit or an emotional touch. He often needs a direct or a physical touch. He experiences a unique joy in it. This is why people create towns and live together. They long for each other's company. Although one may not always get the neighbour one likes, yet man does not wish to live without a neighbour. This desire for such a contact is the 'sentiment of touch'. It is innate in man. But Gandhiji included it in his 'eleven vows.' It is not enough that we do not consider anybody as an untouchable. We must feel that the contact of our neighbour has a sanctity about it. People are not satisfied just by looking at the idol of Lord Vishwanath of Kashi: They touch the feet of the idol; embrace Lord Vithoba at Pandharpur. They purify themselves with that touch. Indeed, no words can ever describe the glory and joyfulness of that sacred touch.

There is this same sublime sentiment of touch or contact in the company of pious people. If this were not so, it would have made no difference to us, whether Vinobaji were staying with us here in the Sadhana Kendra or were far away in the ashram at Paunar. We would have, then, felt neither the need nor desire to seek Vinobaji's company. Even when one agrees that love is not geographical and that it is a feeling experienced in one's heart, one observes Vinobaji shedding tears on learning of the sad demise of (Shrikrishnadas) Jajoo: It might well be argued that Jajooji had left us only in the body. But, even that wrench had caused grief. Our body is not lowly and profane. It is sacred. Hence, we weep when a great man or a saint leaves this world.

When we consider somebody else's body as a means or a subject of our pleasure or our carnal desire, then the feeling of sacredness for his body disappears. This kind of carnality amounts to an insult, not only to man but to God as well. The body of every human being is as sacred as the idol of God or the body of a saint. The touch of man too is as pious as that of a saint or God. This is what Gandhiji's belief of *sparsh-bhavana* (the sentiment of touch) really implies. Even otherwise a man cannot live without a neighbour. He lives in a community where there is mutual support and trust.

The Purpose of Fellowship

Apart from support and shelter, there are some other purposes as well why people prefer to live together. Just as people come together in a railway compartment for a journey; at some public place for either delivering a speech or listening to it, or in a temple for worship, in the same way men come together in a colony or locality for some specific purpose. When men gather without a purpose, the gathering is called a crowd. But when people create a town, it is always for some purpose or the other. For that they need each other's company and co-operation.

The desire for neighbourliness, proximity or companionship is instinctive to man. Here, we have chosen to describe it as the 'sentiment of touch' (*sparsh bhavana*). The principle basic to that sentiment is that every man's contact or touch is sacred. This sentiment gives birth to morality, virtue, courtesy and the beauty of interpersonal communication. We often endeavour to save even those who are terminally ill. The soul is believed to be immortal; why then struggle to save the human frame? Nobody asks such a question. All bodies in the universe are consecrated indeed. However, we have restricted ourselves to the sacredness of the human body. To sum up, then, every human frame is pious; every human contact and relationship too is sacred. Fellowship implies this faith.

Fearlessness is Necessary for Fellowship

We generally observe that a woman is usually wary of contact. She would prefer to shun proximity and keep herself aloof and safe. It

is quite obvious that we do not wish for the company of those from whom we would rather remain aloof. We cannot be happy in the company of persons whom we would like to avoid. A surreptitious smoker avoids the company of his parents. If he is told that even God dislikes young smokers, he would even will God to sleep or drop unconscious for a while. If I fear a goon in Kashi, I shall either wish the goon to leave the town or will myself emigrate to some other place. In short, where there is fear, there can be no fellowship. We cannot live with someone who frightens us. Hence, fearlessness is indispensable for fellowship. Do we not pray daily: 'Let fear be eliminated from every place.'

Secondly, we should not harbour in our minds any dislike, scorn or disgust regarding the person with whom we live. A mouse will not frighten us, but the snake does. Yet it is the mouse that disgusts us. Those who live together should not have contempt for fellowship. As long as a woman either fears or scorns a man, there can be no fellowship between them. And as long as such a sacred fellowship is not possible, there is nothing like a woman's own life. She cannot live with a man; she will live with his support and depend on him. Only with women will she be able to live freely. In *UttarKhand of Ramcharitmanas*, the epic-poet Tulsidas shows how 'devotion' is greater than 'knowledge'. Man is knowledge and 'woman', illusion or 'Maya'. As a result, knowledge is enamoured of Maya or illusion. (As per the grammar of the Hindi language 'knowledge' has been allocated a masculine gender; there is no neutral gender in Hindi). According to Tulsidasji, there is this risk about 'knowledge'. But 'devotion' after all, is a woman. She cannot be fascinated by the beauty of another woman's face. Hence, the path of devotion is safe for the worshipper; not that of knowledge. That is to say, if women live together, there is nothing to fear. But there is a risk for both when a man and a woman live together. This clearly points to the conclusion that the fellowship of man and woman is not just impossible but also undesirable.

Friendship Among Women

Here, a question might arise: It may be accepted that a woman is not fascinated by another woman, but does she or can she love another woman? Does she regard another woman's body as lovable.

and sacred? We generally observe that traditionally a majority of the women are in the habit of regarding not only their own bodies but even those of other women as impure. A man's body is considered nobler than that of woman. A woman looks down upon her own body. As a result, we find that there is comparatively a far lesser degree of friendship between women. A man may relinquish his whole family and go to the extent of sacrificing his very life for the sake of his friend. The Bible tells us that is the highest sacrifice; nothing could be greater than when a man gives his life for another. A woman may sacrifice her life to save her husband's life. Even for her son she might court death. If the occasion arises she might even lay down her life for the sake of her parents, brothers and sisters or daughters. But, an occasion when a woman abandons her entire family for her friend's sake, is indeed rare. The friendship between Lord Krishna and Arjuna is well known to history. It is on account of this lacuna that women's organisations lack life. For women are not wont to pour life into any institution except that of the family. Friendship must grow among girls, so intense indeed, that they would be prepared to give their lives for each other. Men too are often full of envy and jealousy. Men have killed other men for the sake of a woman. As poet Giridhar asserts, 'The dynasties of the Kauravas and the Pandavas were destroyed by Draupadi'. Sita was the cause of war between Ram and Ravana. It was Helen, the beautiful young girl, who caused the war described by Homer in his well known epic, *Iliad*. A man may go to the extent of exterminating another for his passion for a woman, and yet, envy or jealousy is not socially recognised as a basic trait of man's character or personality. On the other hand, in the case of a woman envy for the rival spouse has become a part of our linguistic idiom. Women must put an end to this tradition. They must cultivate among themselves the feeling of felicity and friendship.

Fellowship Among Women

We often come across women's organisations named as 'Sisters' organisations. The word sister is relative. Let us analyse what such a nomenclature might envisage. Does it imply that all women are sisters? It is as clear as daylight that this nomenclature has been coined in relation to men. The women wish to suggest to all men that they

should consider all women as their sisters. Is there no brotherhood among men? And yet you would hardly ever come across a men's organisation. There may be Universal Brotherhood Organisations, for you need various organisations for different purposes such as organisations for Education, Physical Training and Games. All men are brothers of each other; their kinship does not call for a special mention. But there is no sisterhood among women and whatever relationship they have with men is fraught with fear, suspicion and embarrassment. Even real sisters could be rival wives and there may be jealousy between them. The fellowship of women too is not autonomous. It is mostly limited to the family. Therefore, it happens to be a man's creation. As a result, women's fellowship is not independent; it is relative. A man's friendship or enmity is entirely of his making. As far as women are concerned, a friendship or enmity which is not connected with men is seldom seen. In her life a woman gives primary importance to kinship, not friendship. She is basically family-oriented. She creates her own world. And a family is based more on kinship than on friendship. This is why we usually do not come across independent and autonomous fellowship among women.

In short, to create fellowship between women, it is not enough that a woman is not afraid of another woman. Today, a woman considers her body or the body of any woman as being defiled. It is man's body which usually receives appreciation and accolades such as handsome and glorious. It is the body of the man which is principal and primary, and that of the woman secondary. Citizenship too primarily belongs to man and only secondarily to the woman. Man is primary; woman secondary. Her citizenship too comes next. The army apart, even in the realm of religion her place is subordinate to man's. Even a noble and liberal scripture such as the *Bhagvadgeeta* endows her with entitlement to salvation only after using the adverb 'also' suggesting thereby that a woman too is entitled to salvation along with the Vaishyas and the Shudras. The word 'also' indeed, makes a world of difference.

Real equality will come into being only when men and women are free from fear and feel undiluted love for each other. Formal equality or unity is a different thing altogether. The equality conferred upon woman by law, Constitution or social etiquette is formal and often only on paper. This legal equality must be translated into real

and positive equality. There is safety and reassurance in the family. But, it lacks positive content. In a family, men and women live together and this co-habitation ensures her security. But it lays a premium on man's responsibility. The woman is protected, but the man's risk increases. In reality, the companionship of the two should double their mutual safety and reassurance. Their happiness and security must be multiplied by two.

However, a woman's life is dependent on and dictated to by man. Hence, the relationship between man and woman lacks mutual trust. Women often take the lead in taking another woman's character to pieces. Loyalty to her husband is regarded as the highest virtue in a woman's life. A woman who embodies such a quality is considered virtuous. But in fact, loyalty and sanctity are two very different things. Sacred fellowship or togetherness can be groomed only on the foundation of mutual love and trust between women and women and women and men who are not filially related.

2

The Question of Womanhood

Whenever we go to the market to buy anything, we usually tend to buy things of the latest model. For instance, if we are buying a car, we demand the newest model. That which is the most up-to-date is considered the best. For modernism, the newest is the best. Once a lady said to her husband, a woman is the latest model in God's creation. Therefore, she is naturally superior to man in every respect. God first created Manu or Adam and then the woman. Thus, the woman is His best creation as she is the latest edition of humanity. 'How true indeed', said the husband. 'The fact of the matter, however, is that', continued the husband, 'God created all the artistic things he had planned to before he created woman. In fact, He was afraid that if woman were to emerge earlier, she would go on proffering uncalled for advice in each and every matter. Her meddlesomeness would not allow a single thing to be completed. For this habit of offering unsolicited advice is instinctive to women. That was why God created woman right at the end.'

A Superiority Complex is Inimical to Fellowship

If the woman considers herself superior to man, and the man in turn regards himself superior to her, both will seek to dominate each other with the help of their distinctive powers or abilities. Where there is a struggle for domination there can be no fellowship. For in such a situation, every individual seeks to dominate the other and conspires to turn the other individual into his own personal property. Where an individual is considered a property of the other, the very individuality of the person so possessed is destroyed. Then there is no room for fellowship. Only the person who dominates is able to maintain his individuality. The one who accepts the other's domination naturally has no independent life. So far women and men strived to keep themselves under each other's control with the help of their distinctive capacities. This enabled them to live side by side with each other, but it was at best nothing more than co-existence. Co-existence merely implies being together, not living together. Therefore, the co-existence of men and women so far, has failed to flower into fellowship.

Living together needs equality: equality which implies a relationship of equality or equal status. Equality does not mean uniformity. If a woman becomes 'manly', that is almost like a man, and if a man becomes 'womanly', that is like a woman, it may be called a kind of uniformity. But that would destroy the specific and distinctive characteristics of both. A woman will no longer be a woman nor the man, a man. This is not equality. Equality can only mean that in the relationship between woman and man, both will have equal status and value. In a family, we all share an equal status and value. In the family, we have both a brother as well as a sister. The brother will continue to be a brother and the sister will remain a sister, but the status of both will be the same and equal. There can be no fellowship till we establish equal status for both woman and man.

But when we talk of equality between a Brahmin and a scavenger and between the rich and the poor, we imply a very different meaning. There, we wish to suggest that the Brahmin will cease to be a Brahmin and the scavenger will no longer be one. We intend, thereby, to eliminate all differences. Here, we do not intend to obliterate the differences between a woman and a man. That is not our aim. The real meaning of equality between man and woman is equal

compatibility. They must weigh the same if held in the two pans of the same scale. Both must have equal status, value and respect in the society. This is the *sine-qua-non* of fellowship.

True Compatibility

When we speak of fellowship, the thought of co-education naturally comes to our mind. Co-education, where boys and girls study together, has already been implemented in schools. Quite a few thinkers even today harbour doubts in their minds about this initiative. They question the desirability of co-education. However, before we discuss this issue we must ask ourselves one even more fundamental question. The question is: do we consider the mutual togetherness of a woman and a man as desirable at all? We have not yet finally resolved this issue. In fact, no country in the world, so far, has solved this problem. It is incorrect to believe that other countries have found a solution to this issue. It is true that some co-operation between women and men has been achieved as regards ordinary matters in external affairs. There is a co-operation between women and men in economic as well as, to a certain extent, social matters. But, all this boils down to the fact that the fields which were so far considered as strongholds of men, and as such, were monopolised by them, have now fallen and are thrown open to women. But this equality belongs to external matters. Compatibility, on the other hand, is an inner matter. If women begin to ape men, they will turn into pseudo-men; but that will not add to their inner strength and essence. Fellowship needs the co-operative togetherness of women and men with their distinctive inner genius and strength intact.

The Pinnacle of Co-education

The mutual togetherness of women and men is indispensable, but not enough. Formerly, boys and girls were kept, as it were, in separate, air-tight pigeonholes. Hence, it was necessary, in the beginning, to lay stress on co-education. But mere co-education is not enough. Around twenty to twenty-five years ago, the system of compulsory co-education was abolished. But, it did not mean that the boys and girls should again be separately educated. It only

suggested that the need felt earlier to bring the boys and the girls together ceased to be relevant. Hence, the abolition of compulsory co-education was not a step backward, but in fact, a step forward. Co-education, today, is a common practice. Hence, the law for co-education is no longer relevant. When boys and girls cannot live together without risk and fear, when they cannot learn together without surveillance, then it becomes necessary that opportunities are generated for their fellowship and co-education. Hence, co-education was insisted upon to begin with. But, now the togetherness of women and men has become a normal and common practice in society. In a situation such as this, separate education too is provided so that boys and girls are enabled to develop their distinctive and special genius and characteristics. Boys and girls, as humans, are entitled to co-education; but as men and women they may be separately educated too. This is the consummation or pinnacle of co-education.

Women and men must have their fields of work appropriate to their special respective talents. But these fields of work should not be mutually exclusive. A woman has certain distinctive talents and power. Her fields of work will be in tune with these. Similarly, a man's field of work too may be a special one. But both are human beings. Humanity is their chief characteristic and it is common to both. Therefore, their life and education, for the major part, will be together. How can they co-operate in the family and in society if they do not live together? For a life of togetherness, equal status is indispensable. Nobody needs to be wary and cautious of the other as they live together. If we are cautious of each other, we will not be able to trust each other. And how can fellowship ever flower where there is no mutual trust?

The Traditional View

Traditionally, religion has endowed the woman with a status that is either above the man or below him. The woman is either a goddess or otherwise a mere item of property. On the one hand the scriptures tell us that 'Goddesses are happy where women are worshipped, and, conversely, all rituals are infructuous where they (women) are not so worshipped'. This is what Manu has said. *Manusmruti*, the scripture, is also accepted as human theology. The same scripture says elsewhere,

'A woman needs to be protected by her father during her childhood, by her husband during her youth and by her son during her old age, (thus) she does not deserve to be free.' Scriptures condemn an unmarried status for a woman. Traditionally, a Hindu woman is not entitled to a celibate life. Therefore, she needs to be protected by her husband when young and by her son when old. In short, so far as a man is concerned, a woman is either to be worshipped or jealously guarded as a piece of property. The conservative thinkers believe that a woman does not deserve freedom. They argue that this is not a piece of legislation given by any theology nor, again, the view held by any particular school of philosophy. This is simply a fact of life. Even if we endow a woman with freedom, they argue, she would not be able to bear it. She is just not made for freedom. Therefore, why blame the scriptures? Let us take the example of the cow. It deserves to be worshipped and, hence, let us worship it. We will also regard it as sacred. But shall we ever allow it to wander freely in a forest fraught with tigers and wolves? This applies to the woman too. Women are the bright lamps that illumine our homes. They are meant for procreation and, hence, deserve to be worshipped and also, therefore, deserve to be protected at all costs.

This view is not limited to the traditional theologians. Quite a few anthropologists today also hold a similar view. There is, they assert, a natural difference between a woman and a man. Their bodies are meant to serve different purposes. Their nature too suits those purposes. How can you go against nature! Their talents and powers are different because they are naturally different. The very physiology of a woman is such as would make her dependence inevitable. How can the poor scriptures help it. All that the scriptures have done is merely described the factual situation. 'The woman is unfit for freedom': this is not a scriptural diktat, but a statement of fact. The creeds or the religious leaders who pretended to be the protagonists of women's freedom and sought to achieve it, had ultimately to meet with ridicule and failure. Nature does not brook interference. In short, the feasibility or possibility of the fellowship of woman and man with equal status is a question of life and death for the woman. The adherents of scriptures assert that 'Nature herself has decided upon the issue. Hence, this is the fundamental question in the life of a revolutionary woman.' If we accept this argument based on nature, then the very humanity of the woman becomes secondary.

She continues to remain a human being, but a second-grade one. Fundamentally, it is the man who is credited with first class humanity; the woman comes next. Do we have any answer to the problem? Do the women have it? If women are not able to solve this problem through their attitude and life, they must accept a subordinate status. There is no other alternative.

Women: Individuals or Objects?

By the grace of God this is not a problem that would defy solution. But in order to seek that solution, the woman must rise above her 'physicality', her obsessive preoccupation with her body and her psychological obsession with her looks, with her physical appeal to others. A woman manifests her obsessive physicality in varied forms. This is why women have a sharper sense of desecration through touch than is the case with men. A woman likens herself to a creeper called 'touch-me-not': A mere touch makes it shut its leaves. This touch-me-not-ism has become the very essence of a woman's moral being. The traditional Brahmin having purified himself with a bath in the holy Ganges and covered himself with a silken dhoti, walks through the street so warily and cautiously lest he might be touched by somebody and thus lose his purity. He pretends also to sprinkle water on the street. This obdurate aloofness is born out of a sense of purity. I avoid another man's touch because I consider my body to be pure. Any contagion, I believe, would pollute my body. This kind of untouchability is known as personal holiness.

But the woman's sense of purity is of a different kind. That feeling of personal purity conceals in itself two antagonistic feelings. Her sense of physical purity is quite different from that of a woman who has put on the holy saree. On the other hand, paradoxically, every woman considers her body less sacred than that of a man. Indeed, she is filled with the feeling that a woman's body is impure, desecrated and dirty. A woman's body is regarded as impure even by man, even if it is his own mother's. A *shaligram* cannot be touched by a woman because her touch defiles. She is not just weak, she is unclean too. Hence, the woman on the one hand, is a thing to be preserved and on the other, an object to be concealed. A thing that is to be preserved needs protection. This means that she loses not her purity, but her

chastity. We handle glassware with care, there is no fear of its being impure, but only of its breaking. Two eatables like the *papads* or the fragile sweet called *battasa* are preserved with the utmost care, because we fear that the mere touch might splinter them. Similarly the woman's body too is to be preserved and protected. A religious Brahmin has to be wary and cautious about the other's touch only for sometime, i.e., during his daily rituals, and not always. But for the woman, the very contact of a man is contagion. A mere touch pollutes.

Sanctity in Contact

As a matter of fact, contact endows us with sanctity and strength. Therefore, we seek the company of holy men and saints. 'Let us seek company and friendship with the noble and the saintly,' exhorts a Sanskrit saying. Holy contact purifies and consecrates. We touch the feet of the great. People used to kiss the apron of Jesus. Wherever there is the sense of love and purity, contact is a source of strength. We want social workers to seek public contact. Without public contact there will be no strength in the movement. It will not become real. Contact is deemed desirable and necessary. The contact that we would rather avoid is contagion or pollution. A doctor treating leprosy patients usually avoids touching them as far as possible, and when contact is unavoidable protects himself with the help of disinfectants. The fact of the matter is a woman regards all and every contact as contagion. Her body, for herself, is both pure and polluting.

An Untouchable is Pollution Symbolised

During the movement for the removal of untouchability, we often used to say that untouchability was a great sin. It was a crime against humanity. In those days, quite a few traditionalists, who believed in ancient scriptures, often said that our argument was a white lie. Untouchability had no element of hatred or disgust for any man. Why, when we sit daily for our household worship, having bathed and clad in the holy garment, we do not touch even our favourite son or the dearest grandson: Where is the question of hatred here? Even more terrible arguments used to be marshalled by those apologists of tradition. They used to say that these people felt bad that we regarded them as untouchables. As a rejoinder, they should look upon us as

untouchables. That would put an end to the matter. We would have no grievance whatsoever. Could there ever be a more heartless and diabolical argument? All that they wanted is that the untouchables should not touch them. When you sit for worship, having just finished your ablutions, you do not touch anybody nor do you allow anybody to touch you. This is true, but this is not untouchability. Here, there is no compromise with your feelings of love, nor any hatred or insult to anybody either. The question of untouchability arises when we regard the very contact of others as contagion. It is necessary to explain this to the people at large in simple terms. It is not as simple and straightforward as it appears. It needs deeper thought. When I am in worship at home or cleaning the toilet, I do not touch anybody nor do I allow anybody to touch me. This is an entirely different situation. This is not the practice of untouchability, but simple do's and don'ts of practical life. But when a man is regarded as untouchable on account of his birth in a certain caste and remains one forever and in all situations, then all his moral virtues and spiritual achievements fail in converting him into a touchable person. His very contact is taboo for us, like a contagion. The man becomes a living symbol of pollution.

The Touch of Sight

This feeling of untouchability is seen in a higher proportion in woman than in man. If there is any touch that a woman avoids the most or she fears the most, it is the touch of a man! Not just being touched by man, but being seen by him too is taboo for a woman. The limitation does not apply only to the physical touch, but to the fact of being seen as well. Young girls, specially dressed up and adorned, walking on the roads often become victims of the hungry looks of roadside Romeos! This is an ocular touch, a matter of sight. As a result, no woman ever walks with her normal pace and gait. Poets have waxed eloquent over her fascinating pace and elegance in walking. Poet Tulsidas, too, has compared her grace and gait with that of the quiet majesty of an elephant, her voice with that of a nightingale and her eyes with those of the yearling of a deer. As she walks through the street, she becomes even more conscious of her womanhood. As she walks, she is shy and wary, unable to look steadily at any object. She feels that she is the target of the stares of the entire

world. She is eternally self-conscious. There might be those who find beauty and art in this attitude. It must, however, be accepted that this is surely not a state of freedom nor of self-discipline. It is with a similar shyness and caution that a woman lives in society. A free and natural life is not for her. This is because both man and the woman herself have regarded the body of the woman as an object. She has, therefore, turned into a object of enjoyment and not a human personality. This is what makes this basically a spiritual problem.

Even America and Russia have not arrived at this point yet. Russian society has outlined that a woman's body will not be commercialised, nor will it be an object of exhibition and show. Russia has achieved this much. It has prohibited a woman from being used as an object of commerce and entertainment. No socialism can ever allow this kind of use of a woman's body. Here, on the other hand, we are revived to stage demonstrations against obscene posters. Such obscene posters could never exist in any socialist country. Socialism would never tolerate a woman's charms being exploited to promote the sale of cigarettes, literature or any other consumer goods. America has not yet achieved even this kind of ban.

A woman's body is regarded as an 'object' both by man and woman herself. When something is considered as an object, there are only two options left: absolute regimentation or complete freedom. There is no third option. Let me give you an example: Suppose, there is a young ten-year-old girl in the family suffering from asthma. The doctor has prescribed a medicine to be taken at 10.00 in the morning on an empty stomach. The parents find it difficult to follow this condition as the house is full of sweets and eatables, and it is hardly possible to keep an eye on the girl all the time and ensure that she does not take them. The parents therefore want the doctor to prescribe a medicine that sets no dietary restrictions. The body of the woman is an 'object' for man. Therefore, either keep the two strictly separated from each other or else offer them total freedom. Some so-called advanced countries have opted for unhindered freedom to woman. What is wrong, it is felt, if a woman's body is meant for enjoyment? What is the need for regeneration or discipline? Only one precondition is enough. Her consent must be necessary. Nothing should be done against her will. And consent implies freedom.

Socialism demands that mere freedom is not enough, there must be equality as well. Just imagine that we have both tigers and goats in

our park. Each dwell in separate enclosures. Now, suppose we decide to accord complete freedom to both daily for just an hour's duration. Accordingly, the goats are moved out of their enclosure and the tigers out of their cages. Then complete freedom reigns! But, then what can be the fate of such an arrangement? Will the goats ever consent to such a dispensation? For, the freedom will only be an unrestricted opportunity for tigers to have their fill at the cost of the goats. A goat is a delicacy for the tigers and they have been given full freedom to have it. This could be the only implication of such a freedom. Where is the question of the consent of the goats? Therefore, even while conceding that freedom needs consent, the latter would be meaningless without equality. The tiger and the goat must enjoy equal status. Without such an equal status, any consent would be hollow. Socialism has reached this far! That is to say, a woman and a man can regard each other's physical appearance as lovely and thus, can also harbour a desire for each other. Free consent of both is all that is needed. But this is really not enough. What we therefore plead and submit is that an individual must not only regard another's body as merely beautiful, but also sacred. Free consent does not include this sentiment. And when we speak of an individual, the terms obviously includes a woman.

When each other's bodies are regarded as sacred, any contact automatically strengthens and empowers. When we regard each other's body as a means of pleasure, we tend to misuse it. That is known as exploitation. Because, here, one man is another's means or instrument. He ceases to live as an individual. What a terrible exploitation this is! Fellowship blossoms when mutual contact leads to mutual strength and glory. There is inequality when one person is the protector and the other the protected. Suppose I am travelling in a railway compartment with Lokendra and Bhramarji (names of persons). They are ever anxious and concerned to see that I am not put to any inconvenience whatsoever. It is true that it makes them alert and efficient. But, it reduces me to an object to be carefully preserved. That makes me weak and unalert. When natural contact is regarded as mutually sacred, it leads to mutual advancement.

Goat in the Tiger's Belly

Today a woman's contact does not give strength to a man and, hence, it does not become holy or sacred. That contact, today, is

merely a means of lascivious pleasure. A man, at the time of his marriage, does not feel that his fellowship with his wife will add to his strength. On the contrary he feels that his responsibility has increased. No man, right from Lord Ram to Ramkrishna Paramhansadeo and Mahatma Gandhi in our own times, has ever felt that marriage has given him strength. At the most, man feels that marriage has saved him from depravity and licence. H. G. Wells is a well-known futurist novelist of recent times. In his works we come across very realistic and correct pictures of the future. He has written the history of the world. One of his novels is *New Machiavelli*. On a certain occasion, in that novel, a man says to another, 'Who is this lady?' 'The lady who saved me,' replies the other person, meaning, of course, the woman who saved him from other women. The lady too might as well say that the man was the one who saved her from other men. But, it must be seen that there is a great difference between the implications of the two apparently similar statements. If the two were now asked as to how they fared, both might tell us that they were living together. If we want to probe further and would like to know whether they implied that they depended upon each other, the lady, in all probability, might reply that she lived in the shadow, under the protective umbrella of the man. Just as the lamb lives in the stomach of the tiger, the woman is in the stomach of the man. This is not fellowship or living together in the true sense. Forget the question of morality, the very citizenship of a woman is formal. It is an objective fact that her very humanity is secondary.

Woman Must Initiate

Under such circumstances, where do we start? The woman must begin with herself. For, basically it is her problem. She must give up regarding her own body as an object. God alone knows if man will follow suit. But this is the most momentous and auspicious resolve that the woman must make. So far she had been regarded as the object of man's enjoyment and his property. She was a part of his wealth and glory. The woman too was customarily counted along with his elephants, horses and chariots that made up his majesty. The man showcased his wealth through the body of his wife. The ornaments on the body of his wife or daughter-in-law was the measure of the wealth possessed by man. When my father attended any

wedding ceremony, he did not dress up like a king in velvet with shining garments, nor did he adorn himself with gold ornaments. But it was my mother, who was adorned, top to bottom, with gold ornaments. As if, she was the 'showcase' of my father's wealth. Hence, we must make it the fundamental article of our faith that a woman's body is not an object of exhibition or enjoyment. Of course, the initiator of this determination must be the woman.

The traditional attitude towards woman must be abolished from all those institutions and fields of social work in which women are working. The aim of woman's social work must be social transformation. Here, the meaning of social transformation would be a revolution in the status of woman. This fundamental revolution will rule that a woman's body and beauty will not be exploited as objects of exhibition or pleasure in any advertisement or entertainment programmes. When this is achieved, the touch of a woman will be regarded as holy and as sacred as that of a mother today. Yet even today, the mother's touch is not considered completely sacred. If a youth were to sit in the lap of a great seer like Vinobaji, it would not be taken amiss. But had Vinobaji been a woman and if a young boy were to sit in his lap, it would have appeared to most people as very improper. This shows that the touch of a woman even as mother let alone as the daughter, is not regarded as entirely sacred. As a result, the mutual contact of woman and man has failed to develop the woman's power.

Sensuous Enjoyment

Our human senses can be used both for good and bad things. There is a use which can be holy and the other one, unholy. When the senses are indulged in for the sake of pure joy, it is sacred. But when the senses are indulged in for sensual pleasure, it is unholy. Let me make myself clear. Suppose there is a garden full of beautiful flowers. The spectacle is immensely enthralling. This is an unmixed joy. But, when the very sight of the rose makes us pluck it or crush it for preparing jam from it, it is sensuality usurping the place of joy. Sensuality kills joy. When one sees a healthy and beautiful child playing happily, one's heart leaps with joy. But if, at the next moment, one feels that he too, should have had such a child, then the joy is vitiated with attachment.

Intense love abhors attachment. Let me tell you an interesting anecdote. Two modern ladies were strolling in a garden. Having caught sight, from a distance, of a charming child, one said to the other, 'What a sweet child indeed!' The other lady exclaimed with recognition, 'Oh! This is my own child!' 'How is it that you did not recognise your own son from a distance?' asked the friend. 'In fact', said the mother, 'I know the governess and it is through her that I could recognise my son.'

Apathy is Not Non-attachment

Please note, that this distancing is not non-attachment; it is a feeling of apathy and selfish disinterestedness. There is neither love nor respect for children. The child is kept away because he is a hindrance to her enjoyment. This is heartlessness. There is no trace of motherly love. The child is a pastime, a means of entertainment, an object of ownership. There is minimum, if at all any, sensuality and perversion, in motherly love. The body that is not an object of our enjoyment and use will naturally receive the noblest and the most ardent love from us. God is not a means of our enjoyment and, therefore, a devotee's love for him is immense and infinite. Where there is no selfishness, love is infinite.

Sacredness and Beauty

Beauty is safe when it is combined with sacredness or holiness. In a manner of speaking, the Taj Mahal is far more beautiful than a temple or a mosque or any other place of worship. But the government had to provide for the Taj Mahal's security by opening an independent security department. The security of any temple is inherent in social life itself. It is protected by the impregnable shield of public faith. In the same way, people should be able to feel secure in society without the fear of any external power, or agency. This is true specially with reference to the woman. Once this consciousness is awakened in the woman, she will become the torch-bearer of a revolution.

Beauty: Divine Manifestation

Some puritans often argue that if something has to be kept completely in the open and must yet be safe, it has to be an ugly thing. Nobody will covet an ugly thing. It is always difficult to protect

a beautiful thing. Two of my sisters became widows in their childhood. At that time, I too was very young. The puritans insisted that their heads should be completely shaved and that they be prohibited from wearing fancy garments so that no man would feel attracted to them. Ascetics who renounce the world and perform penance also are seen to make their appearance ugly and disgusting. Indeed, ugliness has become a part of spirituality. Beauty and sensuousness are taboo. On the one hand, beauty is regarded as the manifestation of the divine. And yet, on the other, beauty, in practical life, it is an object of enjoyment: sensuality and lasciviousness are equated with appreciation of beauty.

The bodies of man and woman must be as beautiful and proportionate as those of Lord Shri Krishna and Goddess Laxmi. This kind of beauty is the manifestation of the divine in life and not an object of enjoyment. Beauty is not taboo. Beauty is an inseparable part of culture. The woman's body is in itself beautiful. The very touch of Bhagwati Shardamata, Ma Anandmayi or the Mother of Pondicherry is sacred and holy. If the touch of saintly men and women is holy (then) the touch of each and every man and woman too must be treated as holy.

Love : The Genesis of the World

According to some psychologists, beauty cannot be appreciated without sensuality and perversity. This science, known as psychoanalysis has wreaked havoc with our thinking. According to this philosophy, all human activity—literature and art, religion and morality, all have sex at their root. Some of these so-called celebrated psychoanalysts have not hesitated even to psychoanalyse Mahatma Gandhi. Lord Shrikrishna, Jesus Christ and Ramkrishna Paramhansadeo, luckily enough, have not been subjected to this psychoanalysis. There is one (Marx) who tells us that the world has the economic factor at its root, the other (Freud) presumes sex as the root. Let us say that love is the genesis of the world.

3

Compatibility (of a Man and Woman) in Essence

Vinobaji often refers to two aphorisms from the Bhagwadgita (The verses where these occur tell us of the life and conduct of the Lord's devotees). The first aphorism: *Bodhyentaha parasparam kathayentach mam nityam tushyenti cha ramanti cha* says that they (the devotees) mutually enlighten each other, sing prayers to the Lord and become happy and satisfied. The second aphorism – *Paraspar bhavayentaha shyreya paramvapaspyethaya* – means that they (the devotees), ever concerned with the mutual welfare of each other, attain the highest state. This feeling for mutual safety is the soul of collective prayer. Lately, such collective initiatives, in some ashrams, are known as communion. This is the modern version of collective prayer. It symbolises a pledge to aspire for the achievement of the highest collective good as all concerned continuously express their feeling and anxiety towards each other's well-being, care and advancement. We shall mentally protect and enlighten each other, that is to say, we shall preserve, educate and illuminate each other's minds so that we can

offer strength to each other. In short, what we need for fellowship or living together is compatibility in essence, equality of status, a relationship of equality. There can be no fellowship, no companionship in the true sense of the word where the status of the two individuals is not equal. We want fellowship of women and men. Therefore, the social status of the woman must be equal to that of man. Equal status does not mean similarity or the uniformity in status. Here, equality means compatibility.

Freud's Theory

The main difficulty here is that women and men fear each other's contact. The woman is even more wary of a man's physical touch. This is because man possesses a strong sexual desire and the woman is the object of his sexual satisfaction. Sigmund Freud, the well-known psychoanalyst, has put forward certain findings based on his researches in the analysis of dreams. Where do dreams come from? There are certain strong desires hidden in our minds. Some of these desires and cravings remain repressed. These desires and aspirations take form through our dreams. According to Freud, the sexual desire, of all man's desires, is the chief and also the most basic. It is so universal and powerful that our whole life is tinted with it. Similar theories have been put forward by sociologists, both in the East and West, in ancient as well as modern times. They propose that sex is at the root of human civilisation; its religious symbols, and literature, architecture and even recreation. This hypothesis finds its expression in the Bhagwadgita in the aphorism: *Kimnyet, kamhaitukam*. What, if not sex, is the motive behind everything? This whole creation is born of sexual craving and nothing else. There is a similar suggestion in the Biblical myth of Genesis. Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, tasted the fruit of knowledge. They become conscious of their manhood and womanhood, respectively. That was the origin of the universe and also the original sin leading to the first fall. The original couple was struck by Cupid and thus began the story of the fall of man. The myth of Genesis, thus, is in a way, also the story of the birth of sin. We too believe that birth and death are the root causes of human suffering.

The Upanishads have in them the following story. In the beginning was the soul. But he began to feel lonely and restless, and

hence, craved that he must have a woman of his own. This craving was the mother of the entire creation. The Upanishads even go to the extent of saying that Brahma himself, who was 'the one and the only' in the beginning craved to be 'many', *Ekaḥ aham, bahu syam*. Thus, sexual craving is at the root of creation. However, Freud has gone much further than this. According to him, the father loves the daughter more and the mother, the son. Similarly, the daughter loves the father more and the son, the mother. This according to Freud, is due to the sexual attraction which the opposite sexes have for each other. That is, here too, there is dormant sexuality. Of course, it must be understood that this theory of pan-sexuality is neither rational nor healthy. Moreover, it is one-sided and hence unscientific.

The processes of creation and procreation have been likened to a yajna or 'sacrifice.' A yajna is sacred. It involves selflessness and self-sacrifice. The Bhagwadgeeta says *sahayajnaḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovach prajāpatiḥ*. With the yajna, the Prajapati gave birth to the creation and he said to them, 'May you get happiness through this Yajna! May this Yajna fulfil all your desires for ever!'

There is a great difference in the theory of Freud and this philosophy behind a yajna.

Meaningless Controversy

A meaningless question is often stupidly raised and quite a few so-called thinkers have raised an edifice of social ethics on its basis. That question is: Who came first—man or woman? Our language suggests an answer to this question. This traditional suggestion, though religious in nature, is unscientific and irrelevant. The word we use for ourselves too has this implication. We are 'man' (*manav* in Sanskrit) and we have come down from Adam (*Adam-admi* in Hindi), who is the father of all. Eve too was born of Adam which means that she too is 'man', i.e., human. Therefore, this is a meaningless controversy. The crux of the matter is woman and man cannot be born without each other. Hence, why waste our time discussing this futile controversy?

Dreadful Philosophy

According to the philosophy of psychoanalysis which we are discussing, the only relationship that can subsist between women and

men is that of female and male. This is an extremely dangerous and unwholesome philosophy. And yet a complete school of writers has produced literature under the influence of this philosophy. According to them a celibate life is not just unnatural, but also undesirable. The great celibate men and women in the history of the world have also been subjected to psychoanalysis. There have been those too who, in their quixotic adventurism in the field of academics, have not hesitated even to subject Lord Ram and his brother, Laxman, to psychoanalysis. Lord Jesus too could not escape them. How could then, Radha and Krishna escape unscathed by them? If a woman and a man can only be female and male, then the only valid desirable and scientific relationship between the two can be that of husband and wife. Then, in such a case, it will not be possible even to imagine fellowship between the two with different relationships and on a different footing. According to such a science or philosophy every woman is somebody's wife, either present or prospective and every man must be some woman's husband, again present or potential. The only exception that could be made would be in the case of an individual's blood relatives, such as son, father or brother or mother, daughter or sister. Therefore, we must ask ourselves the basic question as to whether this is the only form of relationship that can exist between a woman and a man and whether our cultural life must need be based only on this foundation.

Twin Emotional Hemispheres

Some neo-scientists, not unlike some conservative sociologists, take this natural relationship between woman and man as the basis of practical morality. This is an unfortunate premise. Conservative moralists regard the mutual untouchability of men and women as sacred and holy. And this untouchability is the foundation of sexual morality. Hence, the lesser the contact and companionship between the two, the purer and the holier will the lives of men and women be. Their characters will be the purest. This means that both will continue to inhabit two different emotional hemispheres. Our entire social life reflects these two emotional hemispheres. Like the geographical hemispheres, our social life, our family, our institutions and our society have these two social hemispheres, the female hemisphere and the male hemisphere. They have different hostels, different play-grounds, different cultural halls, different places to live in and enjoy! These

places might be large enough to inhabit, but there are tall walls on all sides. The very source of this ethic of conduct is that terrible philosophy which regards any relationship between woman and man, except the sexual one, as secondary and temporary.

At Kashi, the religious capital of the country, Vinobaji was once asked his opinion about the desirability of co-education. Vinobaji had his own style of answering questions. Sometimes, his replies were straight, simple and easy to understand. But, on occasions, he used rather ambiguous and suggestive words, like we find in the Vedas. In answering the above question, he urged that God Himself had answered that question. For God created both boys and girls not only in the same family, but also from the same womb. 'Do you not get an answer to your question in this divine dispensation?' he maintained. If God had wished to keep them separate from each other, he would have seen to it that only girls are born to women and boys to men. If He wanted to do so, it would not have been difficult for the Creator of the universe to have found ways to achieve that too!

Fear and Morality are Incompatible

I interpreted Vinobaji's reply to the people of Kashi in my own words. It is man's right and duty to make suitable changes both in the dispensation of God, as well as in the order of nature. But, what has He gained by dividing women and men in two different hemispheres and by creating two different hemispheres and two distinct worlds for them? Women and men will remain at an arm's length from each other; they will remain wary of each other. Even though they will be attracted towards each other, they will seek to avoid each other! In this situation, there is neither morality nor honesty. On the one hand, every man will be restless for the company of a woman and on the other, she will await her suitor. But both will strive to avoid contact. What will this lead to? How can those who are afraid of each other feel love for each other? If they consider their contact as sacrilegious, how can their lives ever be pure? Feelings arising out of mere physical attraction are not love. These feelings are linked with sexuality and perversion. How can there ever be culture and morality in them? Vinobaji had an important, pertinent premise; where there is fear, there can be no morality. Obviously, then there is no room for fellowship or companionship: they remain a mirage. In such a moral dispensation,

fellowship would be a sin; the very utterance of that word would be a sin; its very utterance would be a sacrilege.

Family-love and Friendship

The scriptures have laid down that 'It is the woman who makes the home.' That is why in our country a woman is referred to as 'family' or *kutumb*. The woman is the housewife and, hence, is concerned about her family. As a result her field is limited to the family. And so, naturally, her relationships are bound to be restricted to her kith and kin. In her life, therefore, friendship does not have the status that blood relationships enjoy. For her, blood relationship is primary, friendship secondary. She might sacrifice her very life for her husband or son; but it is a blood relationship and not friendship that matters here. The fellowship of woman and man with equal, mutual status will obviously need to be inculcated, in the life of the woman, with the loving relations found in the family today. In fact, friendship is another name for affectionate relationships in a family. But a woman will become a true member of society only when friendship can achieve the same place and status in her life as it does in the life of a man today. This feeling of friendship will be the foundation of that ultimate society in which woman and man have equal status.

What will be the medium of contact in social relations: service or citizenship? This is yet another question that is often raised. It is said that service is man's eternal duty, while citizenship is only temporal. In a way, it is true, and yet, even service cannot be a medium of fellowship. And beyond certain limits even citizenship gets flawed, socially. Similarly, if service too becomes very widespread, it might cease to be an instrument of social welfare and turn into social sickness. Don't most of you feel that there should be no real need for service? Obviously there is no equality in the relationship between one who serves and the person who is served. A benefactor, on one occasion, might as well be a beneficiary on another. The servant might sometime, be superior to the person served and at other times it might be the exact opposite. The Scriptures exhort us that the mother, the father and the teacher be served on par with God. Here, the person served is revered as God. But when service is offered to a common man, the servant is the benefactor and the other person, the recipient. The relationship between the servant and the served is neither equal nor

loving. It is a contingent relationship, one that has expectations in it. Even Bhaktiyoga (the path of devotion) regards fellowship or friendship as almost the final stage. The consummation of devotion is total self-confession. Friendship is a step before confession. The Lord says to Arjuna, 'You are my devotee as well as my friend and, hence, I am going to unravel this great secret to you.' We aim at a society in which there will be no servant or person served but only the relationship of unmixed love. For instance if I am ill, you look after me, make special food for me. This may make you feel happy and it puts me under an obligation. But, please, also suppose that I am not ill. You have purchased some sweets from the market and the very first morsel you taste, reminds you of me. You suddenly lose all pleasure in eating, since I am not there with you to share the joy. All of a sudden, most unexpectedly, I arrive. I am pleased, as you too are happy, and thus your happiness multiplies. This is affection. It is friendship. And this is not possible without an equality of status between the persons concerned.

To establish this foundation for fellowship in the society is more difficult for a woman. Indeed, her situation is a strange one. Her status is riddled with self-contradictions. On the one hand, she regards man's contact and companionship as risky and on the other, she looks up to him for protection. She is afraid of the other, indeed terrified when all alone. Hence, even reason gets perplexed. And that is why even Lord Buddha was puzzled. On a suggestion from his disciple Anand that a few women should also be admitted in their order, Lord Buddha said that if in the ordinary course of events his religion were to last for a millennium, were he to agree to the suggestion, it would die out in a hundred years! Till quite recently the Ramakrishna Mission too did not admit nuns, who had renounced the world, into its fold. There are quite a few pious nuns amongst the Jains and their trials and tribulations have been well recorded. There are nunneries in Christianity, to them quite a few novels have been dedicated. In short, when a man decides to lead a celibate life or becomes a monk, he does not face any kind of difficulty. But, if a woman renounces the world, her celibacy will not last long. She is not entitled either to celebrate life or live a life of reunication(*sanyas*)

To sum up, one experiences fear when one is alone and one also faces risk from one's neighbour. A situation such as this is undesirable

for both. One must experience no fear when alone, and there must be joy in companionship; this ideal condition must be realised. True fellowship is possible only when a man is not weary with himself and also does not feel fear or loathing for others. Mutuality or reciprocity is the basis of social life. Without relationships there can be no fellowship! Man needs fellowship and hence he aspires to it and also expects it.

Spiritual Essence of Man

If man continues to be afraid of his neighbour, his life will be further divided into two hemispheres. The first, familial and the second, social. Of these two, a woman's world will be limited to the family. Man will exercise his monopoly over the social world. Then, the familistic universe, society or village, which we cherish as an ideal will remain only an utopia. A familistic universe is one where people having no kinship by marriage or blood relationship live together. Today, there is an ongoing border conflict between two nations. There are celebrated thinkers amongst us like Jaiprakashbabu (J.P.), Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and Shankarraoji (Deo) who have urged that some of us must cross the border (between India and China) to establish contact with the people on the other side. This contact is not an ambassadorial one, nor one between people's representatives, but more of a man to man, one to one relationship. This contact again must be genuinely hearty and not merely formal. This is the fundamental problem regarding the creation of a familistic society: Is a true and pure loving fellowship or companionship at all possible when women and men live together without being related to each other either through marriage or by blood? If this were not possible, then our dreams of familistic universe or familistic society will remain dreams for ever. This is not a pseudo imaginary problem as some feel it is. It is a fundamental issue. It is a problem concerned with man's spiritual and moral essence as well.

Woman and men may differ in their egos or identities, but their essence is the same in some and invariably compatible in all spheres. Hence, we believe that the woman is capable of emancipation. Saint Janabai, Saint Sakhubai, Meerabai, Anandmayi Ma, the Revered Mother of Pondicherry or Sharada Mata of the Ramakrishna order are regarded as emancipated women. If they were not 'essentially' the

same as emancipated men, they would not have been so venerated. In the context of the familistic universe, the Brahmin and the scavenger are essentially compatible with each other. Hence, there can be no familistic universe unless untouchability is eradicated.

A Complete, Full-Fledged Voter

As citizens, the Brahmin and the scavenger as well as the woman and the man are essentially equal or fully compatible. Each of them is a full-fledged voter. Nobody's citizenship is a partial one. Hence, each has one vote. In our present form of democracy, an individual is the primary factor, not the institution or the family. But even in the most advanced country such as Switzerland, women did not have the right to vote for a long time. Lately in our country too, it is being proposed that the family rather than the individual be taken as the primary unit. Even Vinoba and Jayaprakashbabu occasionally support this view. It will be impertinent here to discuss the pros and cons of this view. But, there is a point in that view which is important for our discussion. It avers that the person authorised to vote on behalf of the family could as well be a woman. It is not necessary that a man alone must represent a family.

Pure-Bloodedness and Property

In this context, it is necessary to consider an important issue. Supposing the family comes to be regarded as the primary factor constituting citizenship. As a result, will not the sentiments associated with the institution of the family enter into citizenship? The institution of the family as we have it today is based on blood relationships and ties created by marriage. Pure-bloodedness and the ownership of property or right to inheritance are its chief characteristics. Pure bloodedness has in it an element of pride. Also nurtured is a strong feeling that the dynastic tradition must continue without a break. Progeny is needed for the perpetuation of the dynasty. There must be a male child to perpetuate the family name as also to perform the funeral rites on the death of the father. Otherwise the disaster described in the Bhagwadgita as 'the dissolution of the funeral rights' might befall the individual. The girl cannot perpetuate the family name. After all, she is meant for another family. The satisfaction of Kanva Rishi on

having sent Shakuntala to her husband, King Dushyanta, is described by the epic poet Kalidas, as the happiness and relief one feels on rendering a trust to the person to whom it rightfully belongs (*Pratyarpitanas ivantaratma*). Thus, the son is the inheritor, the daughter somebody else's trust held by the father till she is given away in marriage. Hence, it is the son who is the foundation of the feeling of family pride. It said of the ancient Sanskrit grammarians that the joy they felt when they succeeded in removing just one syllabic foot from a sentence, was comparable to the joy experienced at the birth of a male child in the family.

The sentiment of family property is linked with dynastic pride. Just as the son is needed for the performance of funeral rites, similarly he is needed as the heir to the family wealth. Till recently it was the son who was regarded as the sole heir, just as he alone had the obligation to perform the funeral rites. Hence, we come across cases where issueless parents, that is, the father as well as the mother, have performed the ritual called the *Putrakameshti Yajna*. No one prays for the birth of a daughter. The yajna for a son had been performed by King Dashratha and all his three queens had participated in it. These sentiments are part of the family. If the family, as we know it today, becomes a part of citizenship, we shall again regress to the old society in which the *Gotra* and *Pravara* prevailed.

That is to say, a village might consist of one *gotra*. The familistic village will be the village of one *gotra* or one dynasty. It was to drive home this point that I analysed, rather elaborately, the issue of a family voting. It is undesirable to make family the voting unit. But even those who would make it the unit, should first insist that a woman and a man have equal status in the family. The aspiration for the son, who will perform the last rites and inherit the family property, must fade away. Only then will the family have a social focus and will be instilled with the characteristics of citizenship. The family as we have it today is mainly of tribal character, that is, it is racial in nature. Its socialisation is necessary. In the family of today the place of woman is subordinate. In the context of changing motives, she becomes either a goddess, mere property or a means of pleasure. But she is never counted as a person. The cow is both a goddess and a teacher too. On appropriate occasions she is worshipped, but she can never be counted as an individual, like a man is. If we wish to make the family

congenial to fellowship, the institution will need a fundamental reorientation and restructuring. There are two necessary conditions of this reorientation. First, the status conditions of this reorientation. In this the status of a woman must not be subordinate and secondary, there must be no family property.

A Woman's Excessive Preoccupation With Body

The origin of a family is in marriage and the marital relationship. Hence, there is one more point to be noted here. That is, there must be no ulterior motive behind marriage. The communists insist that all marriages must be love marriages and there must not be any other motive or purpose behind marriage. Motives like economic well-being or physical security must not consummate in marriage. We must welcome and accept this premise, as we move ahead. Socialist revolutionaries do not want a woman's body to be exploited as a commodity either to be exhibited or sold. A woman's body must not be sold nor must it ever be decorated to cheer or charm a man. They also do not want a man's body to become an object for another man or likewise, a woman's body to be an object for a woman. However, it has now become imperative to realise and propose the fact that no man should consider a woman's body as an object (of use or pleasure). So long as man continues to regard the body of a woman as an object and the woman too continues to acquiesce, she will never acquire an equal status with man. Today, the woman regards her own body as her wealth and a subject of interest for a man. Hence, man may be rich in virtues, knowledge and achievement. But the wealth of a woman consists only in her beauty and body. Beauty means bodily beauty. Can there be a more decadent carnality than to regard one's own body as one's only wealth? True, a wrestler's body with its hugeness and enormous prowess, is his wealth. Hence, he even charges money to exhibit it. Exactly, in the same way every woman considers her body as her wealth. In the days of slavery, a man was purchased for his labour power and a woman simply because she was a woman. As a matter of fact, man must not regard the body of a woman as an object of his pleasure and the woman too must cease to do likewise. Today man does not regard his body as an object of enjoyment, but the woman looks upon her body as one. Hence, in our society man is the seeker of pleasure and the woman the object of pleasure. That is why the necessary moral revolution must be initiated by the woman.

Let me elaborate this with an example. See how the differences arise. Suppose, there is a man and a woman sitting in the market (to sell themselves). The buyer of the man will carefully evaluate his labour power. The person who purchases the woman is satisfied with the fact that it is a woman. In case the buyer of the woman is herself a woman then she might have some other motive. But, the person buying a man, whether man or woman, will consider the virtues or the strength of that man. This criterion has resulted in making the woman far more obsessed with the body. It is almost as if she regards her body as her very soul. This has generated a very strange situation. It is difficult to get an unattractive daughter married. Hence, her place and status in society are subordinate.

There has been one even more serious consequence of this. Indeed, no one can save the honour of a person, whose only wealth is his own body. The honour of the person who is ready even to sacrifice his life for his prestige can be saved and protected. But when the very body itself is the symbol of honour, how indeed can it ever be protected? Today, a woman is a thing to be guarded with the greatest care, because in her case her body is her only wealth. She seeks and awaits her protector. It goes without saying that the costlier the thing to be guarded, the more caution would it need for its protection. We remove our shoes before entering the house. But when the shoes are very costly our attention often turns to them. We carry our watch even to the bathroom, lest someone pilfer it. The woman is costlier than the most costly diamond ever; whether she be our mother, sister or wife. They must be most scrupulously guarded and kept in the anteroom of the house. When a catastrophe arises, her body must be destroyed lest she is taken captive by others. Thus, she may either destroy herself (Johar) or else be killed by us. This is the consequence of considering her body as wealth. The woman is fond of decorating herself and thereby heightening her charms. Let her use nail paint and lipstick and other cosmetics. We do not grudge her self-beautification. Even man does it. He too decorates his body. The only difference is that man does not regard his body as his only wealth, while the woman does. In fact, beauty is a divine manifestation. It commands reverence. The decoration and exhibition, which are so often resorted to nowadays with a view to earn something or impress others or to charm people, have in them neither beauty nor art. They are decadent vulgarity. If

a man has a fleet of five cars and a wardrobe with fifty coats, it is nothing but a vulgar show of wealth intended to browbeat others. This is neither civilised behaviour nor cultured life nor beauty. It is snobbery, an ugly aping of the rich.

4

The True Meaning of Beauty

The main question is whether there can be, between a woman and a man, a loving relationship distinct from a sexual one or kinship. The basic meaning of fellowship is fellowship apart from the family. So far, the theologians and the propounders of social morality regarded this kind of extra-family fellowship of woman and man as impossible and, therefore, taboo. Hence, they had to formulate stringent rules in this regard. The fact that a woman and a man are irresistibly drawn towards each other was regarded as the basis of conduct by the theologians and the elite of society. Therefore, the entire social morality is based on this fact. So much so that even a mother and son, a father and daughter and real brothers and sisters too are not allowed to remain together in privacy. In the family all these relationships are considered as the most sacred and the best. Even then, the fellowship of women and men in privacy is regarded as objectionable. And the justification that is submitted is '*Balwaan indriyagramo vidwaansmapi karshat*' that the organs of the body are so strong that even the wise are swayed by them. These bodily organs

are so impetuous that they irresistibly influence the mind. Therefore, every woman and man, however sacred their family relationship, must always be cautious and wary of each other. In short, of all the cultural relationships between a woman and a man, the relationship of male and female has been regarded as the most potent one by all moralists and leaders of society.

Marriage : Not a Natural Institution But a Cultural One

The desire for fellowship or for living together is natural in man, but the organisation and limits of fellowship are cultural. Living together makes mutual protection necessary. A really meaningful fellowship is one which mutually enriches the lives of each participant. Man advances when culture grows in to nature. It is clear that culture and not nature is more important in the case of the fellowship of a woman and a man. In short, it is the culture and not the natural relationship between woman and man that must make the foundation of our social life. Let us take the example of the relationship of husband and wife. No man is naturally a husband nor any woman, a wife. One is male and the other female. It is their wedding that binds them together as husband and wife. This relationship is obviously not natural, but cultural. Hence, marriage is not natural, but cultural. The women and men who live together as life-long partners cannot do so merely on the basis of physical attraction for each other. Suppose a man weds a stunningly beautiful woman, who as ill-luck would have it, suffers a stroke after a few days and loses all her charms. There the man does not love her, but takes her only as a means of the satisfaction of his carnal passions. This is nothing but a sexual relationship. Here, there is no room for love. The man married her for her beauty but the woman became ugly after an illness. Now, he had no interest left in her. In such a situation, divorce is the only alternative. In such a case, then, it becomes useless to regard marriage as a cultural value. When marriage has a cultural value, the relationship of husband is more of love than mere sexuality. It is not just physical contact but the sweet communion of two personalities. It begins with the body, otherwise marriage itself would be unnecessary. But as the marriage matures over the years, the physical element weakens naturally. Sexuality gradually gives way to love and other motives predominate in the place of mere conjugal life.

Some people say that they married for the sake of progeny. Here again, it is the consideration of the family or the society that prevailed. But this much is not enough for fellowship. The husband and wife, who live together to fulfil familial or social purposes do so more out of a sense of duty than mutual love. They live together because religion rules it or society stipulates it or family honour demands it. The fellowship that is born out of religious consideration or as part of customs and traditions has in it only the sense of duty but no ardour. Their hearts apart, they live together only in body. In fact, this is nothing less than a divorce. Formally, they may not be separated but they no longer belong to each other and yet live together. This is not fellowship, but only coexistence. This is what prevails in Russia and America. They have neither mind nor heart, only physical proximity. This is not living together, but rather, dying together. This is not the life of a house-holder but the fellowship of the graveyard.

Friendship Must Prevail

The relationship between a woman and a man will be more stable and sacred as its sexuality, that is carnality, diminishes and its lovingness and cordiality increases. Thus alone will their relationship be lasting, pure and clean. Things such as self control, morality, religiousness or a sense of duty do not come into the picture here. It is a *sine qua non* that when two persons live together there would be minimum physicality between them. Now, when the two have transcended their bodies and no longer need physical contact, as it were, do they, one might ask, live with each other's souls or spirits? Again, the pure soul is unmanifested. How can one live with the soul? This only means that the persons live together at the physical level and yet physicality is not the most important factor between them. If the body predominated, then it would be a sort of coexistence of two corpses. Fellowship is a face to face cordial togetherness of two individuals. That is, along with the bodies, the minds and the hearts too must unite. Physicality automatically goes to the back burner when two persons come together with love and ardour. Therefore, it is friendship that prevails in fellowship.

Gandhi, in fact, was not a handsome individual. But we all loved his body. Most of us, indeed, look like cartoons and yet we love each other. Not everybody's father is handsome, nor each one's mother

a charming fairy and yet everybody feels his mother's body is glorious and beautiful. This glory and beauty can be seen with eyes that sparkle with the sanctity of love.

Mere Cohabitation is Not Fellowship

In any relationship based on self-interest, people do live together but that is far from fellowship. The boy loves the mother as long as he needs her. The mother likes him so long as he supports her survival with his earnings. The sister showers her love on her brother till he fulfils her fancies. And a brother loves his sister only till he gets service from her. 'Man loves everything out of self-interest', says a Sanskrit maxim. All these are contingent relations in which interest, need and motive prevail, and love is secondary. Love is something very different from interest, need or motive. It would be a false and pseudo fellowship which has self-interest or motive in it. Often in marriage and family relations, private property becomes its foundation. We usually wish to give our daughter in marriage to a rich family. We often desire a daughter-in-law with a handsome dowry. This is the worst situation. Where persons need each other for help and service, there is still scope for love and sanctity. But it is the gross economic motive that has become predominant in the cases cited above. In cases such as these, it is not only love losing primacy but culture too losing all meaning. Where culture receives shoddy treatment and pecuniary lust overwhelms, a human being becomes a saleable commodity. The body is sold. The woman selling her body is called a courtesan. She has no social prestige and is socially treated as an outcaste. Both society and law condemn her. But when a marriageable boy sells his soul for dowry and the girl her body for the luxury of a car and bungalow, we do not feel that it is the law of the market that is operating. Is this true religion? The custom of dowry, though socially sanctioned, is not a cultural virtue. It is nothing but a blasphemous though systematic outrage. When two persons are living together merely for economic and sexual motives without their hearts being united, then it is mere staying together, not real fellowship. It is a cultural virtue of vulgarity. Gross physicality leads to vulgarity. Hence, every woman must take a pledge that a woman's body will never, ever, be an object of sale or exchange.

A Vast Difference Between a Son and a Daughter

The bridegroom, who takes dowry auctions his soul and the bride barter her body. It is the economic motive, rather than the sexual, that is stronger. The craving for wealth is far more intense than lust. Suppose there is a girl who is beautiful but poor, and hence is unable to offer dowry. Another girl is ugly but in a position to give dowry in marriage. In all probability the money-crazy boy will marry the latter. One might say that he has controlled his sexuality so to speak, his sexuality has been substituted by greed. Needless to say that where there is greed, love cannot exist. Hence, no marriage should be entered into for the twin motives of sexuality and wealth. We not only want the relationship between women and men to be wholesome out of the home but we further insist that their relationships inside the home too must be healthy.

Our relationships today even inside the family are not really wholesome and free from malice. Woman and man are not regarded as equal in the family. They do not have the same status. It is a different matter to look after the old mother with a sense of duty. But to look after her well being and safety because she is a woman, is an entirely different matter. In age, in qualifications and even in achievements she may be superior to man and yet she needs protection just because she happens to be a woman. The father needs protection only if and when he is old, weak or sick. But the mother is to be protected even if she is young and strong and healthy. The son is a helper, the daughter is a risk. It is true that the son's marriage adds to the responsibilities of the father, but then, it also adds to his happiness. The daughter's marriage gives him relief. He has a feeling that it has relieved him of his fetters, as it were, and that now he is prepared even to say goodbye to this world, if the Almighty so desires! Even an ascetic saint like Kanva exclaimed, 'I feel as if I have returned what rightfully belonged to him, (King Dushyanta)'. The daughter is always considered to belong to others and she is always a trust, a responsibility, a burden. The mother and the father, the son and the daughter are obvious family relations and yet there is a great difference between their respective status.

Familistic Society

It is our aim to introduce into society the values of the family. But this can be achieved only when family relations too are refined

and purified. Even a real brother and sister cannot trust each other. Once a brother and a sister went on pilgrimage. During the night they took shelter in a farmer's hut. The farmer received them with great hospitality and finally told them with folded hands that poor as he was, he possessed just one cot with a single mattress. As the farmer lived only with his wife, he had no difficulty in managing with what he had. The farmer also made it clear that his wife and he himself would spread hay on the floor and sleep on it. But he requested the brother and the sister that, since there was no alternative, they should please share the same bed. In great embarrassment the brother and the sister slept with their backs to each other. Even then the fear haunted them. In order to safeguard the family honour, the brother finally placed his sword between his sister and himself. The sword is the only assurance; there was no trust either of oneself or of the other. Such a sword must always be there symbolically representing family honour, or social morality or institutional discipline.

The fellowship of a woman and a man today is neither fruitful nor free because our family life itself is impure. Hence, it is necessary that purified family values must be introduced in our social life. Then only can our society be a truly familistic society.

The Foundation of Fellowship

A familistic relationship is not the same as that which obtains in a collective. There is a basic difference between fellowship and just staying together. The basis of a family is kinship. There is no kinship merely in a membership of collective. There are two kinds of relationships – natural and emotional. We seek an expansion of the natural, familial relationship into the society on an emotional level. A lady of our mother's age is then addressed as an aunty and a man roughly of our father's age comes to be addressed as an uncle. This familial fellowship is not achieved merely through dining together or working together or even through studying or praying together. That would be collectivism of a sort. That might result in proximity but not intimacy. The foundation of fellowship is the familial sense of belonging.

Emotional Ties

We would have the whole village as a family. This is somewhat figurative. Even today, we find kinship relations in the village. The familistic basis of such relations must change. The sense of belonging found in the family is based on birth and marriage. These, that is birth and marriage, clearly cannot be the basis of love or a feeling of belonging in social life. One can have only emotional ties there. All familial relationships except that of husband and wife must be introduced in social life. Marriage does have social consequences. Nevertheless, it is basically a personal relationship. All other relationships are familial and hence can be socialised. The relationship of husband and wife is in no way polluted but relatively it has in it a larger element of physicality. Hence, that relationship cannot be socialised or generalised.

Refinement of the Senses

We seek material happiness, through the five senses, each of knowing and doing. We experience pain or pleasure through these organs. The pleasure experienced through these organs is often described as sensuous enjoyment. But when these very organs are used in a different way, it is called aesthetic sensibility. As a matter of fact, the capacity of the bodily organs grows with refinement. The person who is short of sight and hearing or who is reticent by nature is not the one who exercises a thoughtful restraint on himself. He might as well be blind or deaf or dumb. Insensitivity is not spirituality. Only a highly strung instrument can produce music. The man with clear sight alone can see things at a distance and minutely. A healthy ear must enable us to hear better. The sensitive tongue must be able to distinguish the subtle nuances of taste and a sharp nose must tell the minute differences in odours. The bodily organs of a spiritual seeker become sensitive and subtle. Hence, insensitivity of organs is not a mark of progress.

Aesthetic Experience

When the senses are indulged in, roused by craving and passion, they become an object of physical enjoyment. There cannot be any aesthetic sensitivity in passion. The mere touch of attachment results

in the dissolution of love. Similarly, passion annihilates sensitivity to beauty. True love can never be soiled with carnal passion. Therefore, it is always sacred and beautiful. Craving and passion are manifestations of attachment. Hence for a truly aesthetic experience, carnal lust and passion are hindrances.

Our feelings make the beautiful ugly and vice versa. Krushev accompanied Bulganin (the Russian President) during the latter's visit to the Taj Mahal in Agra. 'How did you like it?' someone quizzed Khrushchev. Pat came the reply: 'Who knows how many million workers were exploited during the raising of this monument. They must have executed these filigree carvings through their blood!' Khrushchev at that time did not see the Taj, but the exploitation of workers. In fact, it was not necessary for him to go all the way to Taj to perceive human exploitation.

Thus, the state of your mind distorts your perception and experience.

Beauty: Divine Manifestation

There are those who pledge not to decorate their bodies and to lead a simple life wearing just a loin cloth or dhoti and a simple shirt. Then why do we adorn the idols of God? Is the Lord so indulgent? Indeed, it is not only the rich but even the poorest of the poor who like to embellish the idol as befits their means. No efforts are spared to see that the idol is as beautiful as it could be. Only the most handsome boys are allowed to play the roles of Ram and Laxman and it is the most charming young girl, who becomes Sita. In short, appreciation of beauty has nothing to do with physical pleasure. Beauty is not an object of enjoyment. It is divine manifestation. Aesthetic sensibility is life.

The Himalayas are majestic and glorious. The waterfalls are eternally beautiful because our sense of beauty is not vitiated either with craving or with any particular mental set up. But the moment we think that the Manas Sarovar belongs not to India but China, the aesthetic feeling disappears and the sense of suzerainty predominates. This awareness reflects an insensitivity to beauty.

Sense of Beauty

Let me give an example. We visit a khadi shop along with a young boy. The store has a large stock of fashionable coats and trousers. "Would you like to buy one of these? You would look smarter in them!" I ask the young fellow. "Oh! Thank you so much Sir, but I already have a lot of clothes. And as for the smartness of the coat, Sir, it looks equally splendid in the showcase and might as well adorn whoever buys it. In fact, there is every possibility that the other person might look smarter in it than me. If I put on that coat, I may not even be able to know how I look until I stand before a mirror. And as our ancient logic goes, 'How can I believe, what I cannot perceive unaided?' On the other hand, if someone else puts on that coat, I will be able to watch his handsomeness." This is the aesthetic sense. There is neither the sense of ownership, nor the passion for pleasure.

Subtle Possessiveness

The ownership of the means of pleasure is not the only form of possessiveness. It can have a subtler manifestation as well. A strong sense of ownership in the absence of a sense of beauty is nothing less than subtle possessiveness. A garden might be full of large, beautiful roses. Your heart leaps with joy as you look at them. And yet you do not wish to pluck them. You feel that they look divine where they are. This is the proper aesthetic feeling. But if you feel a strong urge to pluck them or carry the pot itself with you, then it is a weakening of the aesthetic feeling and the predominance of the possessive genie. The feeling that such a plant in my house garden might win accolades for me is, indeed, a feeling of ownership which dissipates the sense of beauty.

Not Beauty but Vulgarly

I wish to listen to music, but with an ulterior motive. I do not listen to music for the sake of joy but to achieve some selfish gain. That is to say, music is secondary and the gain is primary. This reduces music to an object. This is a debasement of our senses. In fact, this is vulgar. The Ganges flows in all her majesty in front of you; there are the Moon and the Sun in the sky. If someone desires to bring the

Ganges or the Moon and the Sun into his own house or wants the Moon and the Sun for the wheels of his chariot, then it is not aesthetic sensitivity but vulgar covetousness.

The solution proposed by the moralists is a conscious surrender of the senses in the service of God. 'Let the head be used to salute the Godhead; let the tongue repeat day and night the holy name, let the hands be busy in worshipping Him, let the mind remember Him and let the feet always walk towards His temple.' Similar injunctions are given to other organs also. The eyes must see Him. The ears must hear His praise and the nose must inhale the smell of the holy basil placed at the feet of the Lord. This is a clear device proposed by the moralists to save the senses from their vulgar use. But here too, the truly aesthetic emotion is absent. The fragrance of jasmine is far sweeter than the smell of the holy basil. But the mind is sought to be conditioned so that the carnal craving is destroyed. But this too results in a weakening of the aesthetic experience. There is no such feeling in appreciation of beauty. The emotion obfuscates the real nature of the object. It is the state of the mind that matters in feeling. It is said that when Lord Krishna entered the royal court of King Kansa, the former appeared to each spectator in the form the spectator desired to see him in. To conclude, when an object or an individual becomes the object of our enjoyment or passion, the real love for art and beauty suffers and culture degenerates.

Everything in the universe is beatifically endowed with a personhood that is unique in form and fragrance and taste. It is an insult both to the thing as well as its divine creator to think that everything animate or inanimate has been created for our benefit or enjoyment. I use the waters of Ganges but the Ganges has not been created for me. It is popularly believed that women possess in comparison to men a greater artistic bent, a more evolved sense of beauty and a maturer aesthetic sensibility. They are more, it is believed, sympathetic and tender in their sensitivities. They must therefore, know the real nature of aesthetic emotion and appreciation.

5

Friendship

In these lectures, we are discussing the basic nature of fellowship between woman and man – whether that fellowship is based on 'nature' or 'humanity'. In the natural relationship between woman and man physicality predominates. In it, we have already noted how the physical body of one becomes an object of enjoyment for the other. In this matter, the animals are naturally safe. It cannot transgress the natural limits. An animal is incapable of unbridled and unlimited sexual enjoyment. But there are no such controls for man. He enjoys sex freely and at will. Nature might eventually punish him for that, but it cannot *per se* control his licentious conduct. Therefore, the foundation of the relationship between a woman and a man can only be culture and never nature. This relationship requires that woman and man will not look upon their bodies, work and virtues as objects of enjoyment. Respect for such limits alone will make for dignity and cultured conduct.

Enjoyment is always through the sensory organs which, by their very nature cannot enjoy themselves. The ear does not listen to itself nor can the eye watch itself. They need an external object for fruition. Therefore, the external world is regarded as the object of our senses. But when man becomes the object for another man, it is exploitation. Hence, if a woman becomes an object for man, we destroy her very humanity.

Two Types of Forbidden Touch

In this context it is physical touch that is the most forbidden. In fact, the very urge to touch is considered derogatory. If a man is sensually perturbed even by a woman's company or by merely looking at her or by just hearing her voice, then this too can be regarded as a touch of sorts. Yet, it is direct physical touch that is primarily regarded as forbidden. In this, we have already seen that there are two kinds of touch that are considered taboo. For the orthodox Brahmin, the scavenger is an untouchable. Here the touch is taboo, but there is no sensuality. Here the contact is forbidden out of a feeling of purity and virtuosity. It has no relation with cleanliness. Even if the scavenger has had a clean bath and has worn his best clothes, the orthodox Brahmin will not touch him. For a Brahmin, the scavenger, though clean, is not holy. This feeling of holiness is an illusion, it is inauspicious and diabolical.

However, the contact that is forbidden in the case of a woman, is of a completely different nature. Her touch is supposed to be sexually titillating or stimulating. This is precisely why those social reformers, who strove indefatigably for the removal of untouchability from society did not address the issue of 'touch-taboo' between woman and man. This touch taboo is far different from that based on the feeling of cleanliness and purity. The former touch, that is, the one between woman and man, is sometimes compared with the contact of fire with butter. Therefore, the removal of untouchability between the Brahmin and the scavenger or that between the patient suffering from contagious ailment and his nurse, was regarded as progressive, proper and desirable by the social reformers, however, the prophets and the moralists, who believed in religion and morality, never tried to remove the untouchability between women and men. Those few, who did, were mostly hedonists and materialists. They believed that women

and men were naturally made for each other's enjoyment and, hence, voluntary, unlimited sexuality between the two is quite possible, the only requirement being that both parties consent to the act. Physical contact based on mutual knowledge and agreement should be considered as acceptable. They believed that in the relationship that is sacramentalised through marriage, love takes the back seat, yielding priority to exterior considerations. A marriage that is formalised for practical purposes becomes a sort of a contract. And where is the room for love in a contract? Such a marriage is as much materialistic as it is merely physical and even mean. Even when in a sacramental marriage social and religious considerations predominate, genuine heartfelt love has no scope. Such a marriage is a form of sensuality which enjoys religious sanction. The moot point is that when love becomes secondary and other exterior considerations assume importance; the feeling of touch taboo in the minds of women and men remains unaddressed.

Cultural Conditioning

We must consider one more aspect of marriage. Marriage is a sacrament. But a sacrament for what? Obviously to reduce its sensuality. But mere religious rituals do not succeed in reducing sensuality. Therefore, restraint is advocated and even suppression recommended. The truth, however, is that mere separation does not reduce the sensual urge. Sweetmeats are locked in a glass cupboard. The child can see them, his mouth starts watering. Metaphorically, he is devouring the sweets with his eyes. The child may be physically distanced from the sweets, but that has not reduced his desire to taste them. On the contrary, he is all the more keen to eat them. Thus, the touch taboo between women and men does not at all reduce the sexual urge; on the other hand, it is likely to get even more inflamed.

But suppose, the child (in our example) is from a strictly vegetarian family and is, further warned by the mother that the sweetmeat contained meat. Instantaneously, the child's temptation would vanish. This is cultural conditioning. Cultural conditioning ultimately grows into an attitude of the mind. In the case of the woman too, some such conditioning has been cultivated in the society through religion and ideas of social-moral limits. Men and women have also been so conditioned. If they are linked together as father-daughter, as mother-

son or as brother-sister, then, in a moment, the sexual urge disappears. However, inspite of such cultural conditioning, the natural undenominational relationship between woman and man is not purified and sacred. The feelings of carnal sensuality experienced towards each other do not disappear.

Therefore, some religious leaders and psychoanalysts like Freud believed that the relationship between woman and man was fundamentally sex-oriented. As a result, those who adopted celibacy as a religious vow maintained that it was forbidden even to see the face of a woman. Even a progressive saint like Tukaram has opined that one must beware of a woman even if she be made of stone or wood. A woman was considered to be the gateway to Hell. This naturally implied that more the distance between a man and a woman, the greater was his purity and sanctity. This raises a fundamental question, viz. whether a woman, irrespective of her role, is always and invariably an object of man's sensual enjoyment? Theology would give a negative reply in this regard. In the role of the mother, a woman is sacred and blessed. The fundamental question which we just mentioned is—Is motherhood possible without marriage? If from a man's point of view, a woman's purity is consequent on her motherhood, then each and every woman must marry. That is to say, every woman must become a mother. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that the celibacy so noble and desirable in the case of the man is undesirable in the case of the woman. For it is motherhood that makes her life blessed. For man, celibacy is desirable, while it is motherhood that is desirable for the woman.

Motherliness is Sacred

For a man, a woman's touch can be socially acceptable and sacred only when the woman is, directly or indirectly, his mother. Motherliness alone is sacred. The moment a woman becomes a mother, her touch is as sacred as the Ganges. Then, even adolescent celibates like Shankaracharya regard her as worth worshipping and as pure as the Ganges.

*'Sakalkalushbhange swargasopansange
Taraltartarange devi Ganga prasid'.*

The Acharya has worshipfully sought Ganga's benediction by

addressing her as the river that cleanses all impurities, helps one to rise to Heaven and as the river which possesses the softest waves on her surface. The mother too becomes sacred in the same way. But the place of the mother is the family and not the society. There is, in the family, a *sanctum sanctorum*, where society has no access. As a result, the sacredness of the woman-man relationship and the sublime intensity of motherly love have remained restricted to the family. And even when it spills over to the society, it remains limited to the sentiment of motherliness alone. This is not sufficient for the sacred fellowship that must subsist between woman and man. Our ideal is that every touch between every man and woman must be as purifying and sacred as the Ganges. Shankaracharya says that the mere touch of a drop of water of the Ganga would wash away all his sins. The highest ideal of culture and social progress can only be that the physical body of every person is blessed with the sanctity of a place of pilgrimage. In a situation such as this, the feeling of touch must obviously be absolutely unconditional and holy.

[The desire for touch, companionship and contact is basic to human nature. Men do not need any purpose or specific reason to meet and express camaraderie. What is termed as a casual get-together by Dheerendrabhai (Dheerendra Majumdar), indeed has a great spiritual value. Gurudeo (Tagore) often used to say that we have of late forgotten the art of casually and informally meeting without a purpose. Man is by nature a social animal. He wants to meet others. He desires to live with others. Companionship is his destiny. This companionship generates relationships. Loneliness unnerves him. Isolation becomes intolerable for him. Life is contact and relationships.

Escapism

What we usually describe as comradeship or companionship is a different matter. It is not unconditional. We often seek companionship to escape from the obligations that life imposes upon us. Life is somehow to be lived as if it is a punishment, a catastrophe. Consequently, we seek means of enjoyment to pass time, as a means of entertainment. Such an attitude is neither worthy of man nor is it scientific. One can understand trying to forget death or trying to avoid its mention and encounter; but how can one bypass life itself? Such a situation is man-made and cannot be endured. The need to seek

psychological palliatives is the symptom of a diseased mind. Then man seeks to fill life with external colours; or seeks to forget the reality of life. He begins with playing cards and then, to make the game more spicy, crosses over to gambling. As days pass, even these means of enjoyment seem to lose their lure, thus leading to addiction. Drunk or lost in his narcotic stupor, he forgets the reality of life. This is not living; this is seeking an escape from living. This is a refusal to look reality in the face; this is escapism.

Companionship and Sociability

There is a great difference between this kind of companionship and human sociability. The former often degenerates into gangsterism and clubism while the latter grows into an expansion of community and neighbourhood. The companionship of the members of a gang is not the same as the cohabitation of the neighbours. It is with reference to man's natural sociability and his loving relationship with everything, that man is said to be incapable of living in loneliness. He cannot bear isolation.

This is a common human characteristic. Here again, the woman has her distinctive nature. Perhaps it is not in her nature, it may well be a kind of mental conditioning. But it is so deep-rooted and firm that it has almost become a second nature to her. A woman is afraid of loneliness. Even when there are other women in her company, her fear of loneliness persists. For a woman, the company of another woman is not sufficient. When two men come together, it consolidates their courage. When two women are together, perhaps their fear might be reduced, but they do not experience a feeling of complete security. They feel secure only in acquiring a man's support or assurance. Even here one is rather amused to note that she is generally afraid of every man. She seeks man's support on the one hand and is afraid of him at the same time on the other.

Lack of Friendship in a Woman's Life

It appears that there is only one way out. The basis of the mutual relationship between any two persons should be neither fear nor greed. Love alone must be that foundation. It is often noticed that even the most unconditional and purest of relationships has its basis in a blood

relationship. And the difficulty is that blood relationships are limited to the family alone and cannot spread into the whole society. Even when blood relationships expand into the society, they do so on the basis of family alone. Family relationships have not yet expanded into social relationships. In a family, all types of relationships grow, except for the sole bond of friendship. In a family real brothers and sisters are found, but inseparable friends are rarely seen. To seek friendship and fellowship, one is required to step out of the family. The difficulty in the case of the woman is that most of her life is spent within the family. Therefore, the relationship of fellowship cannot flower in the life of the woman as it does in the life of man.

Loving Friendship

Friendship is something quite different. It is a value of human life which has no parallel. It is as intimate as it is sacred. In Sanskrit the sun is also known as *Mitra*, which means friend. The sun is a giver of pleasant warmth and light. Therefore, a friend's company is both lovable and enlivening. In it, there is no selfishness or sensuality at all. Friendship is full of love. The warmth of love purifies without burning. All the drawbacks and vices of the friend are burnt out in love. As fire devours everything, friendship dissolves all vices. Friends are never bored with each other. In the words of Vinoba, this could be described as mutual devotion in fellowship or the communion between Krishna and Arjun (*Krishnarjun yoga*). This communion – of Krishna and Arjun – is an icon of the loving relationship between men.

But, do we have any symbolic words or icons that suggest a certain type of relationship between women and men? We have some such coinages as 'Sitaram', 'Gourishankar', 'Umamaheshwar', etc., which stand for a certain relationship between woman and man. But these do not suggest friendship. Similarly 'Bheemarjun' and 'Ramlaxman' are compound words which do not symbolise friendship as, the word 'Krishnarjun' does. Krishnarjun connotes a particular relation. 'Radhakrishna' is yet another symbol. It too possesses a deep sanctity and profound intensity. But that is a relationship between the lover and the beloved. However, sublime and sacred, it cannot be a value applicable to the entire society. Hence *Krishnarjunyoga* (communion of Krishna and Arjun) and, '*Krishnakrishnayoga*' (the

communion between Krishna (Draupadi) and Krishna) can be emulated as the ideal of social relationships. Friendship is a direct dialogue between two individuals. Of all human relationships, it is the most direct and unmediated.

Gandhi' Immortal Contribution

We have noted above that the woman fears man's company as much as she is afraid of loneliness. The only solution to this enigma appears to be that we must succeed in establishing pure and sacred friendships between women and men. As we have further noted, to begin with, the relationships in the family should be transmitted into the society. But, that is just the first step. We need to go still further. Friendship between women and men in society must develop. Gandhi possibly was the first individual during the last many centuries, who experimented in his own life with both types of relationships. He sought to prove that woman and man can live together with equal status on the basis of fellowship. If this fact is not socially accepted, the humanity of the woman would remain subordinate always and her status low. Of course, Gandhi considered natural relationship as secondary. Exclusively natural relationships are found in animals. Society has a worshipful attitude towards motherhood; sisterhood too is far more holy and full of sanctity than these two relationships. Gandhi exhibited the supreme moral courage necessary to abolish the touch taboo that our orthodox ethical traditions had sanctioned. For that he put his honour at stake. There are those who want a psychoanalytical—that is a Freudian analysis—of Gandhi. It seems to be a piece of good luck that no such assessment is recommended in the case of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna is regarded as the most perfect divine incarnation. But Gandhi with courage and grit took all those risks, which a freedom-loving man of character and integrity alone can take.

Gandhi's insistence on celibacy and abstinence is well-known. He did not favour a life of comforts. He was a worshipper of truth and a connoisseur of beauty. Once J. Krishnamurti made a profound remark, 'Beauty is austere!' There is no embellishment in beauty. Luxury is quite different; happiness in life again is quite different. Happiness is the fruit of love, while luxury begets attachment. Gandhi was a principled believer in non-attachment. For him, therefore, the sacred was beautiful and beauty was truth! Beauty has its own charm.

It does not need decoration. It is never ugly.

Whatever its form and medium, 'intrinsic beauty shines forth through any form whatsoever.' Women and men who are healthy and morally sound appear even more charming to each other. These charms are free from greed or attachment. This is Gandhi's great contribution to mankind in respect of the relationship between woman and man.

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Friendship With Reverence

We find that all our scriptures and traditional social customs have imposed great discipline on the conduct of a woman's life. But there is no provision of friendship between a man and a woman, either in a woman's life or in that of a man. In fact, friendship must have room and sanction in the life of both. In Sanskrit, the word '*mitra*' (meaning friend) is neither masculine nor feminine in gender. Applicable to both, it has a neuter gender. 'Friend' in English is both masculine and feminine. In Hindi, Marathi and other languages, it is masculine. In Marathi the feminine form of *Mitra* is *Maitreen* but in Hindi there is no feminine form of '*mitra*'. At least such a form is not commonly in vogue. *Sakha* (friend) has *Sakhi* as its feminine form and is quite commonly used in our languages. But it is not used to denote the mutual relationship between a woman and a man. King Ajza has described his wife, Indumati, as his spouse, secretary, believer and friend (*sakhi*). He could muster enough courage to say this because, after all Indumati was his wife. The friendship between woman and man, which is totally devoid of sensuality or carnal feeling, will indeed be a great boon to human society.

Common Limits for Women and Men

Motherhood is the pinnacle of glory in a woman's life. Next to it, is her loyalty to her husband. Poet Tulsidas has referred to three types of marital fidelity in the case of the woman. This occurs in a dialogue between Anasuya and Sita. The woman who does not even dream of a man other than her husband is the most loyal as Saint Meerabai did not know any other man in Brindavan expect her 'Vrindavanvihari', i.e. Lord Krishna. The woman who looks upon all men, except her husband, as her father, brother or son, is of a mid-level loyalty. We accorded priority to this consideration in view of social sanctity and woman's liberty. We wish to socialise family relationship. This limit is common to both woman and man. The woman, who exercises restraint on herself with a rational consideration for avoiding public calumny and family honour is, according to poet Tulsidas, the lowest type of loyal lady. The fidelity parameters of the finest two types of loyal woman are held equally in the case of man's loyalty to his wife. The perfect husband is he who does not so much as know any other woman except his wife. He, who regards other women as mother, sister or daughter comes next. And the one, who exercises thoughtful restraint on his conduct out of fear for social morals and family honour comes last. Thus, one might say that these are common moral prescriptions for both women and men. But this is more of an illusion than the fact.

Man of Character

Loyalty to her husband has been regarded as the woman's highest duty; but loyalty to his wife is not so regarded in the case of the man. Renunciation for man is not just the turning away from sensual pleasures; it is avoiding the woman altogether. Laxman confessed that he could not recognise the earrings of Sita; he could recognise only her anklets as it was his custom to touch her feet daily. This is cited as the example par excellence of a man of character. Has Laxman ever said that he had never set his eyes on the face of Ram? Nor does he ever say that he had not seen the faces of Sumitra, Kaikeyi or Kaushalya. One who would rather avoid looking at the face of the woman whom he regards as his mother, is looked upon by us as the highest ideal of moral character; as the ideal celibate man.

Celibacy, Not Misogyny

Although scriptures and social custom regard the touch of a woman as carnal or sensual, the touch of the mother has always been treated as holy and sacred. Then why could Laxman not look into the face of Sita, whom he revered as his mother? This was because his celibacy was within the limitations of the family relationship viz. Sita being the wife of his elder brother.

Here again, there is a subtlety that is rather opaque. There is nothing wrong in saying that 'I am accustomed to touching her feet,' as that is the way respects are paid in our tradition. But it would be improper to say that 'I have never set my eyes on her face' for it would hint at the probability of the face being an object of sensual enjoyment. For the man, who considers the body of the woman as an object of sensual joy also regards that body as impure and desecrated. This cannot be true Brahmacharya (celibacy). This is an expression of disgust towards a woman's body. Celibacy does not consist in misogyny or in denouncement of the woman. If at all there is any negation, it is that of 'womanhood' and 'manhood'.

In my childhood, I often attended the religious discourses of a *swami* (priest), who had sworn to remain a celibate all his life. Sometimes we visited him at his lodgings. But we could not take our sisters with us. He used to cover his eyes with his shawl to avoid looking at a woman, whenever one passed that way. He was highly respected for having taken an oath in his childhood itself to remain a celibate throughout his life. People used to claim that he had never set his eyes on the face of a woman. There was another such *Sanyasi* too. Once a woman inadvertently touched his feet. 'Alas! A scorpion has stung me,' the *Sanyasi* lamented to his disciple and straightway jumped into a pond with his clothes on.

One wonders, if all these sworn celibates would lodge a complaint with God as to why they were at all born of a woman. Goddess Saraswati was born of God Brahmadeo. Could He not arrange something similar for these people? Or these celibates could be, not unlike the divine incarnations, unborn of a woman. It is said that the Lord appeared before Kaushalya (the mother of Lord Ram) and Devaki (the mother of Lord Krishna) first in His true manifestations and then took the form of a child. Hence, the moot point is that if celibacy has

a profound regard for motherhood, then there cannot be any feeling of disgust towards women.

Twin Ideals of Good Conduct and Morality

This contempt towards the woman is at the bottom of our religious and moral tradition. This feeling is deep-rooted in our culture. Indeed on account of a long, ancient and unbroken tradition, this attitude has become second nature to us. Without man, the woman is lonely! says the poet. But, the man without woman is all the more holy! Thus, we have two different ideals of good conduct and morality handed down by tradition. Celibacy is an ideal to be adopted by man and abhorred by woman. We recite the eleven vows daily together. But mere recitation has no meaning. There is no sincere echo issuing out of the woman's heart. It does not possess any ring of truth.

Indeed, there is such a sincere echo, when the words '*Ahimsa*' (non-violence) and '*Satya*' (truth) are uttered but not when the word '*Brahmacharya*' (celibacy) is. There might be an echo in the heart of the man, but it has a very different meaning. One, who has not set his eyes on a woman's face, except, of course, during his childhood would be said to have ascended to the Mt. Everest of man's glory. On the other hand, even as a woman talks of celibacy, she cannot ignore the fact that her real glory is in her motherhood.

Different Views About Celibacy

Orthodox religious regulations offer varying provisions regarding celibacy in the case of man. One of the views is as follows:

*'Shaishvebhyastavidyana yauvane vishayaishinaam.
Vardhake muniurutina yogenaante tanutajyam.'*

The great poet Kalidas had written, 'I am writing about the members of the Radhu dynasty, who used to devote their adolescence to studies, their youth to the duties of the household, their old age to a life of detachment and finally used to relinquish their bodies through yoga-practices.' All the four stages (ashramas) are mentioned here. The stage of *sanyasa* (relinquishment of the world), comes last at the fourth place and, therefore, it cannot be adopted unless the duties of the householder are properly performed. This is one side of the

argument. The other argument runs that the 'sanyasa' (the relinquishment of the world) can be adopted, the moment the soul is filled with non-attachment. That is to say a Brahmachari (one who belongs to the first Ashram) too, can go straight to *sanyas*, the final stage. Adi Shankaracharya was a sanyasi of this category.

The Definition of Vidhi (regulation)

Do the scriptures provide a regulation governing a man's marriage? The technical meaning of the Sanskrit word *Vidhi* or *Vidhan* is command or order. During the *Samavartan* celebration at the end of the schooling at the *Gurukul* (the teacher's campus), the student, as per the provisions of the scriptures, is expected to wed a girl from his own *Varna* (caste). This could be taken to mean that one who does not marry breaks the discipline. So after all, what is the nature of this regulation?

Apoorva Vidhi : Incomplete Regulation

The Mimansakas stipulate three types of *vidhi* (law), viz., *Apoorva vidhi*, *Niyam Vidhi* and *Parisankhya vidhi*. *Apoorva vidhi* is a law governing that about which we have no knowledge. For example, it says, '*Swargakamo yajeta*'; perform *yajna* if you wish to ascend to Heaven. Now we are ignorant of both Heaven (*swarga*) as well as *yajna*. But, the scriptures tells us about Heaven and also about the means to reach it. Here, there is freedom of action, but no alternative. We have freedom to say that we do not wish to go to Heaven; but in case we do, then there is no alternative to '*yajna*'. Today, we can go to the Moon. We are also now aware of many new planets, those we were completely ignorant about in the past. Even the means to reach them are being discovered or invented. But we do not know of any means to go to Heaven, for Heaven is unknown. The law or the regulation that concerns what we do not know is known as *Apoorva Vidhi*.

Niyam Vidhi

Next is *Niyam Vidhi*. If someone asks you to walk down to Mugal Sarai, you might as well ask in return as to why the journey should be made on foot. The specific injunction on walking becomes relevant

because you can travel to Mugal Sarai by bus or by train or even by rickshaw or tonga. Even then you are asked to walk down, since walking has a special significance here. When there are two or more ways of performing an act, and yet only one specific method is recommended, it is called *Niyam Vidhi*. Only one among many alternatives is being recommended. Marriage, for the Mimansakas is a *Niyam vidhi*. Therefore, they do not accept *sanyas* or renunciation. The daily household ritual of fire worship (*Agnihotra*) must be performed life-long. The holy household fire cannot be allowed to extinguish; there must also be the daily sacrifice or oblation. Again this fire-worship cannot be performed alone, the wife must participate in the ceremony as well. When Lord Ram performed the *yajna* after he had abandoned his wife Sita, it became necessary to create a golden idol of Sita. If a widower performs any religious ritual, he must have with him a nut symbolising his wife. A widow, however, is deprived of this facility since she is not entitled to any Vedic ritual at all. Hence, the ritualistic fire worshipper (*Agnihotri*) must inevitably be a householder. This was why some eighty-year-old *Agnihotris* were found to wed girls of twelve. Such marriages took place for purely religious purposes.

Parisankya Vidhi

Parisankya Vidhi, the third regulation or law, does not set out a command or order but offers a concession. For example, a student addicted to tobacco was asked to take to smoking a hukka. On hearing the teacher's command the person concerned said that he had, till then, never smoked. But now that his teacher had asked him to smoke, he must do so come what may. But the teacher then explained to him that he never wanted him to smoke, but merely wished to suggest that in case he could not rid himself of his addiction to tobacco, then he could switch over to smoking a hukka (which was possibly less hazardous). It would, however, be best if he gave up tobacco. The scripture says, 'Eat five animals with five nails' – *Panch panchan kha bhakshya*. But this is not an obligatory command. It only means that if you must eat animals, you can eat such animals. But the best thing would be to avoid meat-eating totally. This scriptural commandment restricts you to certain animals and disallows the eating of others. The eleventh canto of the *Bhagvat* also says the same thing. In such cases,

the scriptures recommended abstention. Therefore, when the scriptures recommend marriage, they also recommend abstention from extra-marital relationships. Secondly, it also means that you should not look at any other woman barring your spouse, as your wife. Before marriage all women are either motherlike or sister like; after marriage all women minus one fall into this category. It is desirable to remain a celibate person, but if that were not possible then you must marry only one woman. Thus, carnality is arrested. Therefore, the theologians have categorised marriage as a *Parisankya Vidhi*.

Mother's Holy Touch

One who looks upon all women as vassals of lust cannot be a celibate man. On the other hand, the celibate person is one for whom every woman is motherlike. There is a well-known dialogue between Mandan Mishra, the celebrated Nyaya scholar and Shankaracharya, the protagonist of Advaita. The former strongly denounces Shankaracharya for his misogynistic attitude, saying that it was contemptible to hate women, whose milk gives us succour, sustenance and survival. This kind of celibacy is ridiculous. In reply, Shankaracharya wonders if anything could be more heinous than having a carnal contact with the woman, who gave you birth and whose milk gave you succour. One must note a subtle point here; the touch of the mother is ever sacred, there is no carnality when the child sucks his mother's breast. The same sentiment must continue even during the period of celibacy and adulthood. But the very touch of the woman is anathema for the advocates of celibacy. This has resulted in double standards in morality; we have already noted how.

Krishna-Arjuna and Krishna-Krishna

It is believed that Lord Krishna's celibacy was never threatened. The Lord has appeared in many incarnations to fulfil different functions. Each such incarnation is known as a form. But the Lord's appearance or form as the paramour of the Gopis or Radha is considered unsuitable for meditation. It does not satisfy our purpose. The suitable appearance or forms are only two, Krishna-Arjun and Krishna-Krishna. In these two social combinations, companionship or fellowship has the splendour of mutual devotion. Hence, in it there is no room for

inhibitions or fear. In the case of Draupadi, the poet says without any inhibition whatsoever, that the Lord Krishna (Shyam) himself took the form of her garment. Thus, nothing separated them. Can there be a greater intimacy than this and a greater emancipation too? The Lord was not called upon to take the garment form in the case of the Gopis, Radha, Rukhmini or Satyabhama. Here, there was no question of embarrassment, modesty or honour. But the relationship of Krishna and Draupadi belongs to a different status and category. It is a relationship in which there is no fear, no embarrassment and no sensuality. What an amazingly sublime ideal! The issues, so often raised, such as whether boys and girls should go together for a walk, whether men and women should work together or not, are superficial, and, in the light of the above high ideal, entirely trivial. When we take note of the relationship of Krishna and Draupadi these issues appear as mere trifles. These issues do not, in fact, reveal the true nature of the problem. The fellowship of Krishna and Arjun is not the companionship of the brave warrior, Arjun, with his bow and arrow and Lord Krishna, the King of the yogis. Again, it is not the friendship of Krishna and Sudama either. Even if Lord Krishna were not to do anything for Arjun, the friendship between the two would have been as intimate as ever. They would have played with each other, dined together and even quarrelled with each other. 'Oh Lord, please forgive me', says Arjun, 'for I have not been properly respectful to you in playing with you, in sleeping with you, in joking with you and in dining with you.' *Yecchavahasaarthamastkrutosi, viharshayyananbhojaneshu.* 'It was quite proper for the Lord,' Arjun further says, 'that the former suffers everything.' For the father suffers the faults of his son, the lover endures the drawbacks of the beloved and the friend has nothing but tolerance for the improprieties of his friend. Indeed this relationship between Krishna and Arjun defies reason, for the sublimity of friendship itself is beyond words.

Creation: Manifestation of Universal Consciousness

This fellowship has spiritual value. Words like comradeship, camaraderie, companionship have come into much vogue these days. They denote love for each other, but they do not possess that value which fellowship (*Sakhya Bhavana*) does. Every person's body must be as holy and inviolable for us as the bodies of our parents.

*Agni yathaiko bhuvana pravishto roopam roopam pratiroopo babhuva
Ekstatha sarvabhootantratma roopam roopam pratiroopo bahischa.*

Everything, from the pillar to the whole cosmos, is the manifestation of the Lord. The same supreme consciousness imbues all. Therefore, everybody, right from the donkey to the greatest saint is the symbol of the same life force. Everything is sacrosanct.

Fellowship with Devotion

The sacredness of life does not only mean the sacredness of the Soul. You may kill someone and then argue that you have only destroyed the body of the person, which, in any way, is mortal; and the soul cannot be killed as it is immortal. Therefore, you cannot be accused of violence. During the freedom struggle, quite a few young revolutionaries argued along these lines. They used to have a copy of the *Bhagvadgeeta*. On the basis of the well-known line in the *Geeta* – *Naayam hanti na hanyate* – they used to argue that this (*atman*) does not kill nor does it get killed. The gifted revolutionary, Senapati Bapat had dubbed Gandhi's non-violence as stupid Non-violence. He pleaded that his own Satyagraha was the true one as it did not insist even upon, non-violence. 'Can this body be saved if violence is not done to it?' he used to ask. That which is made of dust must return to dust sooner or later.

But this is unsound logic. The fact is that we regard as inviolable our own as well as others' body. After all, one must serve the body, if one desires to serve at all. Is it not for the preservation of this body that we need peace in the society? We plan for the survival of the body. When one gives up one's body for that another, one is glorified as a martyr because it is 'a sacrifice of the body'. Hence, sanctity in life can be translated into daily practice only by regarding the body of man as holy and sacred. Therefore, mere fellowship is not enough, it must be coloured with devotion.

This, of course, presupposes that no woman ought to look upon her body as a property or a fortune. The present situation is very ironical indeed. Man looks upon woman as his property; but strangely enough the woman too, regards her body as her fortune. Some ruffians kidnap a rich man and then demand a ransom for his release. The

body of the man has no use for the brigand. But if a woman is kidnapped, it has a very different connotation. One dacoit gang kidnaps women from another gang; the wives of the Gods were often kidnapped by the demons. The very physical body of the woman is regarded as a thing to be enjoyed, as property. This attitude must be abolished from the society. At the same time, the mind of man must be cleansed of the feeling that the woman is a gateway to Hell and that her touch causes man's downfall.

7

The Role of Parents

In our languages some idioms and phrases are deep rooted and they convey a sense of inferiority/superiority in respect of men and women. We honour a person by describing him as 'a prominent public man'. But it is impossible to describe a woman in these words. The words 'prominent public woman' would be slanderous to the woman. When women acquired the right to vote, the question of the propriety of the customary, parliamentary terms and usages raised its head. It was difficult to translate the English terms that were in use. 'President' was translated as 'Rashtrapati' and Speaker was translated as Sabhapati.

The words, 'President' and 'Speaker' can refer to members of both the sexes in the English language, (but that is not so in our languages). To use the feminine forms of these Marathi/Hindi terms, in case we have a lady President and Speaker – Rashtrapatni, Sabhapatni or Grampatni – would be considered objectionable. These idioms reflect mental attitudes, which have been rooted in our consciousness for centuries and have structured the psyche of woman and man both differently and very peculiarly.

Cowardice, A Woman's Adornment

As a result of that psychological conditioning, very contradictory virtues have received social sanction and prestige in the case of women and men. That which is a vice in man becomes a virtue in woman. Cowardice is man's vice, but woman's virtue. Lord Ram (either in Valmiki's *Ramayan* or in *Uttar Ramcharitam*) addresses Sita as 'O timid one.' No man would ever tolerate such an adjective, even for a moment. But the woman wears timidity almost like an ornament. King Dashratha sent Sumanta to persuade Ram, Laxman, Sita to return to Ayodhya with the following piece of advice, 'You may convey my message when you notice that Sita is frightened of the dense forest.' It was not possible to say that Ram and Laxman would be scared. But it was possible in the case of Sita. This is the result of different psychological conditioning.

A Basic Truth of Woman's Life: Dependence on Man

There is yet another angle to this issue. We believe that motherhood is the summit of cultural glory. Motherhood is the symbol of pure, unconditional love that expects nothing in return. The love of the mother is the purest of all and the most untainted. Therefore, it is unalloyed and needs no justification. This motherhood, which we regarded both as the foundation as well as the summit of our culture, which, again, we venerated as sacred and worth worshipping, the same motherhood has also turned out to be the very source of the woman's enslavement, subjugation and helplessness. As a result, a parasitical existence that seeks support from man and husband is the hard, practical reality of a woman's life today.

Had all the wives of King Dashratha been obedient to him, all of them would have received great glory and respect. But when Kaikeyi demanded the fulfilment of the promise made to her, she suddenly came to be dubbed as heinous, unchaste and of low birth. Laxman went to the extent of passing the remark in connection with his father that the latter had become old and senile, listened to the opinions of women and was a henpecked husband. When, however, a woman behaves according to her husband's opinion, she becomes a respectable lady in society.

In the well-known hymn called the '*Shivamahimma*', Pushpadant,

the great devotee of Lord Shiva, says, 'Oh Lord! Since you have accommodated Goddess Bhagvati in the other half of your body, the Goddess suffers from the illusion that you are effeminate. Oh father! Since you have accommodated the divine Mother as a part of your body, she feels that you are lustful and covetous.' This is how the devotee sees it. What could one do? Women are so stupid indeed. When the wife loves her husband, it is a part of her duty. When a husband exhibits love for his wife it is regarded as lust.

Woman's Subordinate Role

Now, let us consider a third angle. Man needs marriage as much as the woman does. Sexual desire is natural in both. But the woman needs man not only for her sexual satisfaction, but also for her physical safety. He is both her protector as well as spouse. This protection and sustenance is rather extraordinary. The king looks after his queen, the money-lender cares for his wife and the pandit protects his wife. But the labourer does not look after his wife in this way, for his wife does not depend upon him economically. Yet, her husband is her saviour. We have noted above that motherhood is regarded as indispensable for the woman. But the same motherhood reduces her to the status of a beggar at the door of man. Could there be a greater misfortune and tragedy? Motherhood is a matter of social glory, it is the symbol of culture. Motherhood symbolises the blessedness and the bliss of womanhood. But the socially valued indispensability of motherhood has made her not only parasitically dependent upon man, but also subordinate to him.

Therefore she seeks to marry, as it were, begs to be wed. Doesn't man too want to marry? He too needs and aspires to marry. But he does not become a beggar, he does not feel it necessary to go down on his knees, as it were, to get married. The woman aspires for motherhood and hence, begs to be wed. And beggars cannot be choosers. No beggar can have alms of his choice. But the beggar or the receiver who can say that the giver will be benefited in giving alms to the former may demand the alms of his choice. There is an audacity even in his begging. But the woman does not say that she is the mother of man, by marrying her, the man's glory is enhanced. On the other hand, in all humility she begs for marriage.

It is worth considering why motherhood should make secondary the role of the woman. Is it because she needs physical help during pregnancy and motherhood? Or, is she biologically different? In fact, in a civilised society, the woman need not have a secondary status on the basis of the above two reasons. The real reason, though somewhat hidden, is that motherhood has been regarded as indispensable for a woman but not so in the case of man as regards fatherhood. The scriptures declare that a married man without a son would go to Hell. This fate cannot be avoided if he has a daughter instead of a son. Therefore, he can marry twice, even thrice. But the man who does not marry and hence does not become a father is entitled to even higher and brighter celestial regions after death. Thus, on the one hand, there is the man who without ever becoming a father enters the highest celestial region on the strength of his celibacy and, on the other hand, there is the woman who when she does not become a mother, is described as barren and goes to Hell. This situation is obviously a cause for concern.

Envy of the Rival Spouse

This has led to something more. A man may marry more women than one in order to beget a son. As a result, we see polygamy in ancient society. There is polyandry in some societies, but there too, the woman is the servant and not the master. This is the fundamental distinction between polygamy and polyandry. In many civilised societies polygamy is still in vogue, but polyandry is regarded as immoral. In the ritual of sacrifice (*yagnya*) there is a pillar called the *stoupa* to which are tied a number of cords. The Vedas cite this example to explain the relationship between woman and man. There can be a number of cords tied to a single pillar, but not one cord tied to a number of pillars. Similarly one man may have many wives but one woman cannot have many husbands. Man too, is full of envy and jealousy towards another man. However, the bitter jealousy of a woman towards her rival mistress is far more commonly known than a man's jealousy towards another man. This is because the custom of polygamy is in vogue. The wife who fails to be a mother is jealous of the rival wife who is blessed with motherhood. Idioms or words such as jealousy towards the rival mistress, step-mother, step-sister are rooted

in our language. Even in our religious literature we often come across them. While showering encomiums on the Goddess Parvati, a devotee describes her as follows: 'Oh, daughter of the mountain, when the Ganges watched in fear your undescribable beauty, she was, as it were, reduced to water! Lord Shankar looked at her angry countenance and taking pity on her, wore her on his head.' Says the devotee, while describing the Ganges in Jagannath Pandit's famous poem *Gangalahari*, 'The waves on your surface rise so high because you were slapped in the face by the indignant Parvati'. Another devotee says, 'Oh! Ganges, thou art our mother. Thou art the necklace that decorates this earth; thou art the flag that ascends to heaven, but the daughter of the mountain (Parvati) is your rival mistress'.

We find that some revolutionary changes have taken place in contemporary society. Yet, the fundamental status of the woman remains unchanged. It is a matter of pride for both when both the wives have deep love for the same husband; but the same thing is a matter of jealousy between the two women. It is this fundamental difference between the love of woman and that of man that glorified the women, who sacrificed themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands. They became symbols of virtue. But had a man immolated himself on his wife's funeral pyre, he would not have been regarded as a saintly man.

Means of Corruption

The woman became a means of corruption because she regarded her body itself as a kind of property or fortune. Pelf and power are the two means of corruption in society. Man can be corrupted through the temptation of gold and the terror of power. Along with gold and power, the moralists have included woman too. The woman, like gold, came to be regarded as a means of temptation. The woman whose body itself is a kind of fortune is naturally regarded as the very epitome of corruption. Unless and until this psychological conditioning is removed, no external remedies can be of any use. The law and Constitution can create a conducive situation. Today, a woman can occupy the chair of Rajendrababu (the ex-President of India) or Jawaharlal Nehru (the former Prime Minister). But even after having occupied that chair, if the woman cannot rid herself of the suspicion

regarding her physical body, then she will still be an object that can be kidnapped. Rajendrababu too, had his own bodyguards. But the protection that would be needed by the woman occupying his place will be of a very different kind.

Today, women participate in war as soldiers. But the way women are used during the war as secret agents or sleuths is indeed most objectionable and derogatory to them. Women are used to gather secret information from the enemy camp. These women tempt and seduce the enemy officers and collect their secrets. The kings of old have always used women for this purpose. Lord Indra, himself had sent fairies like Rambha, Menaka and Urvashi in order to wreck the penance of the rishies. Power-hungry rulers too have put women to such uses to dissuade dedicated nationalists and brave men from their vows. Women must wash away this stigma on their character.

The female body, sacred and holy in the form of the mother, turned into an object of commerce and corruption in the form of the woman. When a young boy approaches a corrupt officer for a job, the latter demands money as consideration or bribe. But if a young girl demands a job, the officer does not demand money, but her body. A woman's body in itself is a big bribe. She has to sell her body for money, too. Man gets the cost of his labour but the woman gets the cost of her body and beauty. Thus the woman who is otherwise a mother, is, in a different sense, also a prostitute and a concubine. There are only women-brothels in the world. Men who have opened brothels, pimp for women only. The problem of brothels is, in fact, a woman's problem. Men cannot solve it. Anyone who regards his body itself as wealth or fortune must have a very contemptible fixation regarding his own body. It is also quite obvious that one is as weak as one is body-centred in one's consciousness. A person who is not prepared to sacrifice his life in war, can never be a soldier. Could there be a greater irony than that the woman who is ever ready to give up her life for her son and husband and also sacrifice her life for the sake of her chastity and her loyalty to her husband, considers herself a thing to be protected by man and seeks his protection? This false contradiction is at the root of her enslavement. During her labour pains at the time of child-birth, the woman is as much on the verge of death as a soldier on the battle-field. But the courage at the time of childbirth is a biological necessity, while the fortitude of the soldier is

voluntary. Such voluntary fortitude must also become a part of the woman's life.

Woman's Helplessness

It is, of course, as clear as daylight that more than ninety per cent women in society will become mothers and, men, fathers. Even then, we shall have to establish woman's dignity in the society by introducing symbolically the value of celibacy or Brahmcharya in her life. Celibacy in the life of the woman must have the same dignity as it has in the life of man. The social status of an unmarried man and that of an unmarried woman must be equal.

Why is it that society today has a different approach towards an unmarried man and an unmarried woman? If you ask a woman as to why she remained single, her reply would be that she could not get married, that's why. This helplessness weakens her internally, because there is no self-determination. If you put the same question to a man he would say that he did not consider marriage desirable. He had adopted *brahmacharya* or celibacy on oath, but his decision was voluntary. Celibacy and renunciation on the part of man are both voluntary. But there is a helplessness in a woman's virginity as well as widowhood. The woman becomes a widow on the death of her husband. There is no greater misfortune in a woman's life. The death of the wife makes a man a widower. He too is overtaken by grief. But the Sanskrit word suggests that the one who had so far been yoked has now (on the death of his wife) got rid of his harness. For Saint Tukaram, the death of his wife was a boon, for that rid him of vexation and made him free. National heroes are often praised for their sacrifice of their wife and home. But the woman who gives up her husband and home is regarded as immoral and characterless. And a widow is no longer entitled to participate in any social and religious affairs. Widowhood is the gravest misfortune that can ever befall a woman. In fact, widowhood is not in her hands. Where there is helplessness, how can there be any room for dignity and honour?

Capacity for courageous voluntary action is the distinctive characteristic of man. Of course, man can intervene only in the realm of the possible. There is human courage in transforming what is

naturally given. Man can increase as well as diminish his natural urges such as hunger, thirst, sex, etc. This applies to all natural drives.

Rationality

Even with regard to his natural instincts, man is free. This is known as freedom of action. This is the source of his joy. Motherhood, fatherhood, sisterhood, brotherhood, all have their origin in nature, and animals forge these relationships. But man nourishes them and extends them to the whole society. Man's reason or rationality is the greatest blessing in his life.

Form of Worship

Family relationships undergo a revolutionary transformation as they expand and widen. The mother of the whole village is nobody's wife. The father of the nation is nobody's husband. These are social relationships and must be carefully enshrined in society. The enshrinement of these symbols is a part of the process of education. To worship something is to imbue a thing with qualities that it does not possess. The stone is not God, we impose godliness upon it. No woman in the world, except the one who has given us birth, is our mother, but we see motherhood in other women as well. This is achieved through practice. This is worship.

There is an incident in Vinoba's life. There was a boy who was staying with their family to pursue his studies. The boy was not Vinoba's real brother. Vinoba's mother looked after him like her own son. Sometimes, she served her sons with the food cooked the previous day, but she saw to it that this boy was never served that food. She was once asked as to why she did not serve stale food to the boy, when she regarded him as her own son, and further, if she did not serve stale food to him, why did she do so to her own children? "My sons", she replied, "are after all my own sons, that is the flesh of my flesh and the bone of my bone. I need not 'regard' them as mine. Even when I serve stale food to them, it cannot but manifest my love for them. But this boy is like my son. Therefore, he is entitled to a special treatment." This is a kind of worship, a religious endeavour. When this endeavour gets stabilised into a mental attitude, it becomes

a faith. Then there is no need for the endeavour. When I do not need to regard 'like' my son or daughter, the one who is not in reality my son or daughter, then he/she has already become my son or daughter.

Universal Man

Social acceptance applies to the concept of motherhood as well. Go into a home and ask a small child there as to who are the persons living in the home. The child will give you all the relations, including his mother and father. If you further ask him as to how his mother was related to his father, the child will say that the mother is everybody's mother, including his father's. Similarly, father is everyone's father, even his mama's. This fatherhood irrespective of one's being a husband and motherhood that does not have to depend upon wifehood is a social value par excellence. The Lord is everybody's father and Goddess Parvati is everybody's mother. The woman who is everybody's mother has no husband and the man who is everybody's father is nobody's husband. This is the achievement of *Vanaprastha*, the state to be arrived at after that of the householder. The next stage is that of the Universal Man, which is also known as *Sanyas*, the state of renunciation. Here, all relations converge. Such a man is a friend of the universe. All other relationships merge into it.

Renunciation of Wife-Husband Feelings

This achievement calls for greater penance-like endeavour on the part of man than that of the woman. We generally believe that a woman beyond a certain age is no longer marriagiable but a man is always a suitable candidate. These beliefs must fundamentally change. There must be some steadfast persons who have voluntarily refrained from becoming either husband or wife so that our young women, adult virgins and widows are safe.

The true guardians of social sanctity are only those, who have adopted the status of motherhood and fatherhood. No state-power, no moral teacher and no saviour of religion is now capable of doing this work. Motherhood and fatherhood cannot be transformed into social values by the man who adopts *Vanaprastha* or *Sanyasa* (renunciation) for his personal enhancement. His personality abolishes

all relationships; it does not become all inclusive and noble due to the convergence of all relationships.

Family Relations and Society

Even today this applies to an extent to social positions and status. Suppose, a lady whose husband is a clerk in the Corporation, assumes the Mayorship of the same Corporation. Now, so long as the lady occupies the chair of the Mayor, she is the Mayor even for her husband, who is the clerk. Or suppose she is working as a Matron of the hostel and the husband is the Secretary. In this case too, so long as the lady is in the hostel, she is the Matron, even for her husband. These are formal limitations of official positions.

In the same manner, when motherhood and fatherhood become social, all family limitations merge into them. A Member of Parliament, whose wife is the Speaker of the House, will address her only as Hon'ble Speaker. Parliament, however, is an institution, while society is as large as an ocean. It includes everybody, all family relationships. All familial relationships merge in society.

But this can be achieved even in the family. My wife is not my wife, but the mother of my children. My mother is not my father's wife, but my mother. This sort of reasoning ensures that the sentiments of motherhood and fatherhood get rooted in the family.

There is a very memorable incident in Valmiki's *Ramayan*. Kaushalya, in deep grief, expresses disdain for the entire womanhood, "Women are fickle-minded", she says. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the hero, furious with his mother, says, "Frailty, thy name is woman". But what does king Dashratha say in praise of Kaushalya? "This Kaushalya is ever alert to serve me as my friend, wife, sister and mother." His admiration is expressed in an ascending order. To begin with, Kaushalya is a friend, then wife and towards the end, she is like sister and mother as well. This sublime feeling felt in the family can be translated into social sentiments.

Transcending her absorption with her body, the woman must advance towards humanity. This alone can be the foundation of her strength. Some might describe this as spirituality; for Vinoba this is *Brahma vidya* (the knowledge of Brahma). Woman will have to accept

the content of these concepts. This spirituality or the *Brahmaavidya* is much more needed for women than for men. Let me explain with an illustration. Suppose there is a wrestling bout with Gandhi on the one side and Gama Pehalwan (the wrestler) on the other. Gandhi does not have the physical prowess to face Gama. Yet we find that the whole world held Gandhi and not Gama in the highest esteem. Jawaharlal (Nehru) and Vinobaji are far more powerful than a King Kong. Obviously, this strength is not physical. This strength, which goes beyond the physical, can be acquired by women in the same way as it is by the man. If the woman succeeds in transcending her physicality, she will rise above herself and also raise man. Today, she considers her charms as her fortune. This attitude must be abandoned.

Woman and Man are Interdependent

If celibacy (*Brahmacharya*) bestows dignity in the life of the woman, then motherhood will not be a cause for her helplessness. That will be her privilege. It will be considered a social service par excellence. Motherhood will not diminish her self-reliance. In society nobody is completely independent, all are interdependent. No person, however, great, can live entirely on his own. Woman and man must be dependent on each other. Their status and honour will be equal. Motherhood and fatherhood will also achieve equal cultural status only when celibacy (*Brahmacharya*) and renunciation (*Sanyas*) in the life of the woman comes to acquire the same status as motherhood. In this regard, the woman must take the initiative.

8

Equality Between Woman And Man

We have noted that the internal relationships in the family are relative. The same woman is mother, sister-in-law and wife to different members of the family. One's daughter is somebody's mother and still someone else's maternal and paternal aunt. But when the same woman becomes an aunt or mother for the whole society, the relationship ceases to be relative. She is everybody's aunt. 'Kaka Kalelkar' is everybody's uncle and 'Mama Phadke' too is everybody's maternal uncle. There was, in Maharashtra, a person called Ganesh Shankar Joshi, who came to be called *Sarvajanik Kaka*, everybody's uncle. The Lord is both our father as well as mother. His fatherhood is enriched with motherhood, and vice versa. Similarly, when family relationships assume a noble social status the same become non-relational and applicable to all.

Lord Shiva's Image

In this context, Lord Shiva's image appears simply marvellous and unparalleled. So many poets, philosophers, thinkers and

litterateurs have come under its spell. Sister Nivedita, Dr Sampurnand, Ram Manohar Lohia, all had a great fascination for Lord Shiva. We have so many Shiva temples in our country. There are so many peculiarities in his personality. He is a denizen of the graveyard, creating life in the midst of death. Physically he is so strongly attired. There is, around his neck, a garland of human skulls; there is an elephant's or tiger's skin around his waist; his body is covered not with sandelwood paste but with the dust from the funeral fire. And his followers consists of the blind and the deaf, the hunchback and the snub-nosed, the ugly, the disfigured, the handicapped and the dunce and the dunderhead, the ostracised and the castaway. All these are part of his procession. And what a grand one it is.

*Amangalyam sheelam tav bhavatu namaivamakhilam,
Tathapi smrutanam varad param mangalmasi.*

(Although your character and disposition are associated with the inauspicious, yet your worshippers are blessed with the holiest benediction)

Characteristics of the 'Whole' or Ultimate Man

The other special characteristic of the personhood as Shiva is that he is a half-woman and and half-man God. The fully integrated person, if a man must have woman's qualities in him and, if woman, must incorporate in her the excellences of man. Thus, integrated personhood must be enriched by the genius of both, woman and man. Lord Ramchandra possessed womanly virtues such as beauty, charm and tenderness. Beauty and charm which usually adorn women, were possessed by Krishna. This is a sign of culture. Lord Shiva is half woman and half man God and hence his idols are also sculpted likewise. This is, however, a rather superficial tokenism, merely the tip of the iceberg. There is a deeper significance in this. Manuben Gandhi has written a book called *Bapu: My Mother*. There was an article published in the weekly *Bhoodan Yagnya* with the title, *Mother Vinoba*. There are fathers filled with motherly love, ever willing to succour with their life essence, the children of their soul.

A Child's Care, Protection and Upbringing Depends On the Mother

There is an extremely important aspect of motherhood which

we must consider. Every society has its arrangements for the sustenance and safety of its members, but all these are secondary. The very first arrangement of complete sustenance is evidenced in the phenomenon of the mother's milk. She offers to the child the very crux of her life, the very essence of her personality. The doctor prescribes for us the tonic made from the extract of many a medicinal plant, similarly the mother offers to her child, the very essence of her soul. The mother's milk is man's first source of sustenance, her lap his first shelter and her garment his first protection from wind and cold. Hence, we get our finest food, protection and shelter from our mother. This occurs when man is unable to procure them on his own. Thus, as the poet says, the mother alone protects and sustains, and also educates in the process.

Vinobaji often says that we must develop the power of the mother in the society. What does he mean by that? Does he imply that women should have more children? Will it be considered a development of mother-power if every woman has eight sons? The significance of mother-power is celibacy in the life of women to acquire respectable status in society. The sentiment of wifehood allows less scope for the growth of celibacy. But the sentiment of motherhood is more conducive to the growth of celibacy. The lives of great men are often influenced by their mothers. We often say that such men have imbibed the virtues of greatness through their mother's milk. We believe that Shivaji sucked the milk of fortitude from his mother's breast.

The Merging of Shiva-Parvati

Today, woman for the most part of life is dependent upon man. But it is she, who gives primary sustenance, protection and education to every man and woman. In the family she is the goddess that provides food (Annapurna) and, as such, she is always revered. The goddess that gives food is regarded as forever full, and never wanting anything. The personhood of Goddess Jagdamba too, is as marvellous as that of Lord Shiva. She is Kali the dreadful. She is Shiva, Durga, Annapurna, Ambika and Bhadra too. In her incarnation as Chandika, she even tramples Lord Shiva under her foot. In her dreadful form of Rudra she is armed with ten lethal weapons; in the form of Sati (the pure woman), she is the very image of powerful penance and she is

so brilliant and cunning indeed that she took the form of Sita herself when she wanted to test Lord Ramchandra. Dressed like a Bhilla woman, she tantalises Shiva. Goddess Laxmi, as we often see, is always at the feet of Lord Vishnu. But, Gauri sits on the lap of Lord Shankar, even in a gathering. As per some myths she compels her husband, Lord Mahadeva to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the miserable whom they encounter in the course of their journeys. In her leisure, she is capable of getting the better of the naive Shiva in a game of dice. Thus, the colourful personhood of Parvati is very fascinating indeed. These two, Shiva and Parvati, are merged into each other. As poet Kalidas says, they are as integrated with each other as a word and its meaning. The word and meaning are both integrated and complete in themselves. The language does not comprise of half word and half meaning. Similarly the convergence of specific virtues of Bhava and Bhavani (Shiv and Parvati) lead to the emergence of the whole man, the integrated human personhood. Kakasaheb Kalelkar had once remarked that the modern man must be made up of the virtues of the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, and Vaishya and the Shudra. The same person must combine in himself the qualities of brain and brawn. The whole or the integrated personality is that which combines in itself the qualities of the heart, the hand and the head. This truly will be an integrated personality.

The Son, Like the Mother and the Daughter, Like the Father

The advocates of machismo in man and the pleaders of femininity in woman may take umbrage at the view that a man must imbibe the virtues of woman and vice versa.

But, we must note here that femininity and effeminateness are radically different from each other. We do not want man to be effeminate or, so to say, a she-man. When a man, devoid of manliness, possesses such womanly qualities as cowardliness and delicacy, he may be described as effeminate. Similarly, nobody wants the woman to be a he-woman. When a woman devoid of modesty, tenderness and charm, is seen to imbibe the manly virtues such as ruthlessness and impudence, she is called a macho-woman. Both these are distorted images of man and woman. These are caricatures, not real images of

woman and man. God is not insulted when we address Him as mother; it is by no means perjorative but a matter of praise to say that Chhatrapati Shivaji reflected the virtues of his mother. The son who resembles his mother and the daughter who resembles her father are considered lucky. This suggests that the son reflects the virtues of the mother, and the daughter those of her father. This means that both have the virtues of integrated humanhood. The role of parents would be rendered superfluous if the son were to imbibe only the characteristics of the father and the daughter, only those of her mother. Men, in that case, would only have a father and the women, only the mother. But the fact is that every child reflects the virtues of both its parents to a lesser or greater degree and this is great good fortune.

The Complete Integration of Woman-Man

Man's virtue is manliness, not mannishness. The man too must possess sensitivity and delicacy; he should not be crude and coarse. Like Sita, Ram and Laxman too were attractive and delicate. Shri Krishna was as beautiful as Cupid. It is not necessary that man must have a dreadful countenance. That is not a sign of manliness. Jawaharlal Nehru has a fascinating face; it does not strike terror. Ram and Krishna have been described as charming to the eyes. Shall we say that they lacked manliness? Hardly any of our Gods has a beard and moustache. That probably suggests that Gods are as beautiful as women. All this leads to the conclusion that we do not want the man to be a counterfeit woman or a woman to be a carbon copy of man. She is not to be an Amazon. She is not a secondhand copy of man. It is in the plays that we have counterfeit women and men. Man's fellowship enriches the woman with his virtues only after the woman has reached the consummation of femininity. Similarly, man's personality, having fully developed in itself the excellences peculiar to man, enriches itself in its merging with the virtues of the woman. This integrated personhood is neither half-woman nor half-man, it is the complete, fully integrated woman-man.

This is the great drawback in the modern woman. Indeed, she lacks modernity. Most women from the upper and middle class are so much given to self-beautification and feigned coyness, almost as if they were plastic mannequins, which can be made to dance to our

pleasure. Today's woman has less of self-control and determination and much more vanity and exhibitionism. She adorns, decorates and exhibits her body so that it becomes, for others, an object of envy and lust. A woman's body may be beautiful, healthy, strong and well-formed, but she need not be a blue-stocking.

The Difference Between Simplicity and Ugliness

Ugliness is not simplicity. Formerly, when a woman became a widow, she was deliberately made to look ugly. This was done to save her from the lustful greed of men. Her hair used to be completely shaved off and all her ornaments would be removed. She was not allowed to use fancy, colourful garments. Also, even snow-white clothes were considered too fancy. Therefore her garments would be soiled and her face set in a morose expression. This is nothing but a form of corruption. In fact, the bespoiling of the beauty of a person in this manner, even if it were for the maintenance of social purity, is not just corruption but barbarity too. It must be remembered that ugliness and simplicity are two different things altogether. Simplicity has a beauty all its own. Decorating the body is both unattractive and often uncultured. For there is neither charm nor culture in adorning the body with a view to stimulating passion among men and jealousy among women. That is the way of the prostitute. A woman will be weakening her soul-power or essence by allowing her body to become an object of exhibition. It is not necessary at all for the ascetic woman, the celibate woman or a widow deliberately to make her body ugly. This too, is a form of exhibitionism. An ascetic distorts his body in such a way that nobody can take a second look at him. This too is a subtle form of tactful exhibitionism, though it is free from the aim of earning a living. If beauty is a virtue in God, it is as much a virtue in woman and man. But it cannot be treated as an object of enjoyment or show. Beauty is a divine manifestation. Mankind will attain the glorious consummation of its humanistic development only when the woman cultivates in herself the enterprising valour of man and the latter imbues himself with the woman's genius for fine art.

Brother-Sister: The Common Factor

The common word in our languages, that connotes both woman and man is 'man'. 'Man', in English includes woman, and 'manhood'

includes womanhood. Some feminists, however, use 'woman' instead of 'man'. But this was on the rebound. George Bernard Shaw called his book *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism* and not *Intelligent Man's Guide to Socialism* and, further, he used the pronoun 'she', not 'he', whenever he referred to a human being. This too was an overreaction. The basic situation remained unchanged, only 'man' was replaced by 'woman'. This is no reform, it is only a reaction. Therefore, it is necessary to coin a compound word that would refer both to woman and man.

At Madanpalli, I once stayed with Dr. Cussins. Both the doctor and his wife, Margaret, were quite old. I became friendly, quite naturally, with Margaret. She was not only motherlike, she was motherly too. During a discussion, I happened to remark that in the modern age, mere citizenship and comradeship are inadequate, there must be brotherhood as well. "But why only brotherhood?" intervened Ms. Margaret. "If you want brotherhood, you should also have sisterhood." I rejoined, "Brotherhood naturally implies sisterhood." "No, that will not do", said Margaret, slightly excited. "You must include sisterhood in it as well" "It would sound rather awkward everytime to say brotherhood and sisterhood", I put in. She then suggested a new word - brosterhood, i.e. brotherhood + sisterhood. Thus, we have a useful compound word. This integrated personhood of man will be full of sancity. In this sacred experiment there will be the confluence of womanhood as well as manhood and it will also merge in itself, the ever-flowing, underground and invisible stream, like that of the mythological river, Saraswati, of humanhood or humanism.

Overreaction is detrimental to both man and woman. We have already noticed that woman and man are both free, but not independent. Both can practice celibacy, but motherhood and fatherhood are interdependent. Even then, woman's enslavement is sought to be justified on the basis of woman's motherhood. So much evidence and proof is marshalled to substantiate this view. But all these are inadequate in themselves. We sometimes, read in the newspapers that one who was a Shyamlal (i.e., man) till yesterday turned, after an operation, into a 'Shyama' (a woman); or someone who was Bhagwati (woman) turned into Bhagwan (a man). This only proves that the essence of woman and man are present in both. On

the body of every man we can see some signs of womanhood. Shri Kishorlalbhai (Mashtuwala) has written some very readable books in this context. He has very lucidly described how in the course of evolution, woman and man came to be separated. Before this separation occurred, the same species had the characteristics of both motherhood and fatherhood. Even now, some animals have elements of both the genders in them. Even in the present highly developed stages of evolution, you will not find a single man, who does not possess the relics of womanhood. But we, today assert that man must have not the characteristics of the woman, but the essence of womanhood. Napoleon, the world famous general, it is said, possessed a face that looked like that of a girl.

There is one more aspect of reaction, which deserves our consideration. The body of the woman, men often argue, is made for child bearing and hence, she does not deserve to be free. As a matter of fact, the woman, who gives birth to man should have acquired a very respectable status in the society. That is her virtue not a weakness, not a drawback but a privilege. Woman shoulders the responsibility of bringing a new man into the world and also sustaining and safeguarding him. Shall we say that probably God and Nature could not trust man with this responsibility and hence He entrusted it to the woman and thereby showed His confidence in her?

Feminist Movement

But, exactly the opposite of what should be, is taking place. Motherhood, which would have, in fact, enhanced the humanity of the woman, actually diminished it, as self-respecting women reacted against it in a horrible way. If, they argued, motherhood was responsible for their enslavement, then they would rather forgo it. If men do not need progeny, we too shall douse our urge. True, anyone who creates or produces enjoys a respectable status in the society; but is the producer completely independent? The potter may choose whether to make a pitcher or a jug; but in the absence of mud and the wheel, he would not be able to make anything at all. It is often said that the ultimate power rests with the producer; but one who gives birth to a human being and thus produces something of great value, does not get recognition. In such a case it is better to renounce motherhood

altogether.

This is a terrifying reaction. Women are vying with men in the field of production and are earning a living. Women are also competing with them even in the field of physical strength. They can do everything that a man can. A woman is now his equal in the economic field. If Prof. Ramamurty can stop a running car, why should Prof. Tarabai lag behind?

Society has committed one more injustice to women. Wages have been paid for the labour of the beast and the slave, but the woman's labour at home has always remained an unpaid one. Therefore, she thought that she too would earn, like man, the wages of her labour. Hence, she has played a major role in the abolition of slavery.

In the same way there were movements for women's citizenship, for her right to vote. These came to be known as the Suffragette Movement. The reaction which we have so far discussed is also a part of this movement. It is known as the Feminist Movement.

9

The Blessedness of A Woman's Life

The basis of society is the concept of equality. There can be no society without equality. The foundation of equality between woman and man can only be their compatibility with each other. As human beings, they are both equal. As woman and man, they are compatible. Of course, there are certain characteristics common to both, just as there are some special characteristics peculiar to each. These special characteristics are due to nature as well as culture. That is to say there are certain peculiarities in women and men, which have been endowed by nature and and there are some which have been acquired through habit. Some of these acquired characteristics have actually diminished the humanhood of the woman. She has become an instrument in the life of man. Till not very long ago, the woman was sold in the market place like beasts and slaves. There used to be a market were women were bought and sold. Even today there is a clandestine immoral traffic. A slave-owner has power over the body and labour of his slave. The slave is no longer his own individual, but is the belonging of someone else. One of the leading,

powerful women, who took up cudgels against slavery, has said, "Slavery is not to belong to yourself, to be robbed of yourself." In slavery there is no selfhood and, therefore, there is no inner essence or power. When a woman lost her self-hood, she forfeited her inner essence and power as well.

The Dilemma of a Woman's Life

If my honour depends not on me but on my companion, then it is not my honour but that of the companion. My honour would be safe as long as he wants; the day he changes his mind my honour will be reduced to dust. It seems that woman concluded that she was bequeathed by nature with a body that could never be protected and hence she would never be able to guard her honour or sanctity. It is not possible to know as to when and why, in the long history of human society, woman was compelled to come to such a conclusion. This is known as natural justice, an argument that is based on natural conditions.

When the woman realised that she could not defend or safeguard her honour, she relegated everything into the hands of man. Helplessly, if someone hands over the very essence of one's being to another person, then his soul is automatically weakened. In such a weak soul, there is neither self-confidence nor strength. The slave too, falls upon the feet of his master. That does not add to his confidence or strength. He is forever ready to give up his life for the master. Similarly, the woman too does not hesitate to sacrifice her life for the sake of her husband and son. If the son falls out of a running railway carriage, the father may pull the chain but the mother in her agony might jump out of the train. It is ironical indeed that the woman who has such tremendous courage for self-sacrifice has no power and confidence to protect herself. She sacrifices herself to safeguard her chastity. She hands over to others the very wealth which she wants to protect. In fact, it is handed over to the person from whom she wants to safeguard it. This is the dilemma of her life.

Purity and Soul Power: The Secret of a Woman's Power

This argument of the naturalists is supposed to be irrefutable. Therefore, it deserves to be analysed in more detail. Nature, it appears,

has defined different limitations for woman and man. Man does not possess unlimited sexual prowess. Sexual urge is one thing, sexual prowess quite another. One might wish to eat a hundred bowls of porridge, but there is a limit to man's capacity to eat. One would like to dress oneself in the best apparel in the world, but after all there is only one body. One might long to sit in twenty high grade cars, but man has only one seat. Desire has no limits, but power has. Sexual enjoyment weakens man. It does not weaken woman, but her urge itself has limits. Thus, man and woman both have limits. But the woman has to pay a greater price both in terms of physical consequence and responsibilities. However, this can provide the natural basis for self-control and soul-force. Therefore, the strength of the woman lies in her sanctity and soul force.

Blind Alley of Self-Negation

But unfortunately, woman has come under the spell of wrong ideas. As if some cunning and selfish goddess prodded her in the wrong direction. Scared of her natural limitations and responsibilities, she sought man's protection. In fact, she mistook as a curse, what, in fact, was the blessing of nature, and her life became hostage to man. She came to believe that she could not do without man. On the one hand, she cannot survive without man and on the other, she lives for ever in a shadow of fear from man. It is obvious that no one can live with a person whom he dreads. Fear can never become the foundation of fellowship. A woman continues to fear man and he continues to live under the impression that she has come under 'my shelter and has no protector other than me'. He struts in his glory and she diminishes under her helplessness. The poet sings in joy, 'Scholars, women and creepers are lusterless without support'. A strong, majestic tree stands firmly and a delicate creeper entwines it. As the tree begins to quake in a storm, the creeper embraces it still more firmly. This is not love on the part of the creeper, it is helplessness.

This leads to a dangerous inference. This woman, who wants her honour protected must either take shelter with a man or else reduce her body to ashes. Thus, in order to guard herself against other men, she needs must seek the shelter of one man and thus isolated, as it were, shut herself into her nest. She gives up citizenship and gets imprisoned in the family. This is the second dilemma in the woman's

life. On the one hand, she has to sacrifice her body to safeguard her honour and sanctity, while on the other hand, she hands over the very essence of her being to man so that her honour is safe. The problem is difficult and the situation pitiable.

This leads to the harmful conclusion that a woman's essence is her body. One whose body itself is the essence of his being cannot have a soul. Thus, a woman falls into the blind mire of selflessness; in the dark pit of soullessness.

A Woman Can Protect Herself by Moral Power

This is the ultimate affront in the life of the woman. If she is unable to save her selfhood even on this front, then she has no hope whatsoever. Can a woman defend and protect herself? That is the ultimate question. She can be protected and made safe, says the man. But according to him a woman can never be self-protected. Socialism, communism, science and religion have no answer to this question. It is spirituality that gives the answer. The day the woman accords respect and prestige to celibacy or *Brahmacharya* in her life, she automatically ceases to regard her body as wealth or property. Her face, will then not be her fortune. There is Anandamayi Ma. I do not know, if she is a realised soul. But she has transcended sex. Anandamayi is a mother, who is nobody's begetter. The woman who regards her purity as her greatest wealth, whether married or unmarried, can never be deprived of the essential genius of her life. Most people would not wish to tease her and the lowest ruffian would not dare to do so. Even if sexually assaulted, such a woman does not lose her chastity. There are other examples too, of such brave and powerful women. Who does not know of Pondicherry's Mother? Here *Brahmacharya* means restraint. This includes conjugal celibacy. The woman is the mistress of her mind, who has, thorough control over her words, such moral power as would automatically diminish the possibilities of such hazards in her life. And if any do occur, she would be able to defeat them on the strength of her moral power. Physical prowess must yield to moral power. Gandhi's moral power proved superior to the power of arms and the strength of the body.

Here one might raise the following question: Man as man is always safe. He does not need either morality or purity of character for his

safety. A vicious, characterless debauch too, is always self protected. But we expect of the woman that she must needs be moral and pure to be self-protected.

The question is both legitimate and fundamental. But we must realise that there is a superior physical power on one side, and, hence, it becomes necessary either that there be greater physical strength to counter it or else some such power as would be higher than physical strength. A woman has no physical capacity. In a situation such as this, moral power is the only power. This is the problem of transforming values. For this, revolutionary women will have to experiment with moral power. It is not that all women will have to resort to moral power forever. It should suffice that a few women dedicate themselves to an experiment with moral power and soul-force. Once the basic values are transformed, the situation will be conducive to social change. Even today the woman is safe wherever there is a civilized society. There she has less to fear from torture and assault. At least till the second World War such a situation was in existence. This is the result of the changed social values. Hence, the woman would remain self protected when the essence of her being stands on moral power. In the society where woman is thus self-protected, conditions inimical to her may not last for a long time.

There is power both in woman and man. The child is proud of the courage of his father and the milk of his mother. Both have an intrinsic strength all their own. The more restrained a man, the more powerful is his seed. That is to say, celibacy or *Brahmacharya* is the foundation of the strength of man. Similarly, the purer the woman, the greater the virtues that will manifest themselves in her milk. The personhood that emerges out of the merging of these two essences will possess the strength and power of both. Although the essence of the woman is different from that of man, both are compatible. Both woman and man are free in their own way, but it is through their prudent and holy union that the new man is born. Similarly, the new humanistic personhood will emerge out of the union of the essences of woman and man.

The naturalists are not satisfied with this explanation. They cite examples from animal life. There is only one bull in a herd. This is applicable to other animals too. In this context, we have already noted

that man's life, in some respects is entirely governed by his nature, in others it is purely voluntary. And hence, culture plays an important role in man's life.

Foundation of Sanctity

Human mind is profoundly conditioned. Therefore, it is for forward-thinking, progressive women to root out old, deep-rooted mental habits and sow new ones. Torture and rape affect the human body in two ways. Suppose a bully forces beef into my mouth. Due to my traditional conditioning, I shall feel that this has polluted me. I shall feel disgraced and dishonoured. People will consider me inauspicious. The physical consequence is rather lasting, but the psychological consequence is due to my conditioning and therefore not lasting. Even then it generates a permanent sense of shame. In order to change this, I must tell myself with full self-determination that no duress or force can make man polluted or impure. Similarly, society must be made to inculcate the belief that no rape can ever desecrate a woman. It is not proper that the woman alone is made to suffer the consequences of the assault. In fact, rape is a social disease and the whole society must suffer its consequences. All civilised men in society must repent over it and atone for it. Many of you probably do not know that quite often in jail, human faeces and urine were forced into the prisoner's mouths in order to abuse and insult them. There are examples of sodomy as well. Is this outrage in any way less tortuous than the sexual assault on a woman?

Hence, society must come to believe that it is the mind of man and not his body that is the foundation of purity and sanctity. No efforts must be spared to make the body strong, handsome and radiant. Even life may be sacrificed to preserve the chastity of the body. But, in the final analysis, the foundation of our sanctity will be our mind and hearts. The basis of vice and virtue is man's mind; his body is only the means of achieving it. Today, in the age of science, the primacy of physical power is dwindling. The status of armed strength too is diminishing. Everyone talks of scientific power. The power of science can be countered only by moral or spiritual might. There is no other alternative. This is soul-force, this is the power of non-violence. This is man's true strength. Whether woman or man, it is here that the real power rests, but more so of the woman.

I have already said that this is the ultimate weapon in the woman's life. On this front, she must show supreme courage with supreme self-determination. Man is self-reliant because he is self-protected. Even in an armed struggle the might of the arms is secondary and the power of the soul is primary. The true warrior is one who has a strong will. A better armed person can spell death but cannot offer life. The killer, the butcher, the armed man may take life without ever giving it. Today, the leadership in society is in the hands of those, whose spiritual power is superior to their physical strength. This situation is very favourable to woman.

Integrated Human Personhood

Woman must regard her body even more holy than a temple. It is said above that every man's body is a manifestation of the divine. Were our Gods, Vishwanath and Vishnu, ever desecrated when their idols were smashed to smithereens? When a man is forced to take poison, he may die of it, but he would not be polluted or corrupted. Similarly, society must cultivate the new conviction that loss of physical chastity does not defile a woman. A child born of rape must be considered as legitimate and sacred as the one born in wedlock. When this conviction takes root in society, then alone will the life of the woman be filled with the radiance of true freedom. That day will witness the birth of the new integrated personhood of humanity which will be combined efflorescence of man's valour and woman's creativity, man's labour and woman's art.

Gandhi performed the historical experiment of non-violent struggle in India because the conditions in India suited an experiment with spiritual power. A woman's whole life is a challenge to spiritual power. Conditions are congenial in the age of science. Reason and intelligent thinking, united with the strength of a richly sensitive heart, transform themselves into spiritual power. This spiritual power is beyond comprehension and challenge. In the cultivation of this spiritual power lies the ultimate fruition and blessedness of a woman's life.

10

Summing Up

Fellowship and self-reliance are not mutually contradictory expressions. On the contrary, they go hand in hand. Nobody is completely self-sufficient in society. Everyone lives among and with others, expecting cooperation and help. Therefore an individual is not self-sufficient and yet he is self-reliant. This means that every individual in the society will live with others, but not off others. He will be the companion of all but nobody's parasite. He will not depend upon others. This is self-reliance.

This logic applies to both men and women. They will live with each other with a deep and intense love. But they will not live off each other. Let me elucidate this further. A father lives with the mother, he loves her more than his own life. He is ready, if need be, to sacrifice his life for her. But, he does not depend upon the mother. But today, the mother not only lives with him but also depends upon him like a parasite. This situation is undesirable. The father has intense love for the mother, but he is not a dependent on her. And he is proud of this. When the mother too ceases to be a parasite living on the father, she

will open a new chapter in her life. The oft-quoted line, '*Na maatu pardaivatam*', meaning 'There is no higher divinity than the mother,' will then be realised in the most sublime sense.

A Democratic Society

The question is raised as to when this will happen. There is no almanac that can predict this. Every moment is auspicious for revolution. But the change will occur only when women will truly need it. Will the men cooperate? They must. There are two persons climbing the Mt. Everest, helping each other. If one of them tries to pull the other's leg, he will himself tumble down. Man must cooperate in woman's march towards humanhood. He will realise that one who seeks to destroy another's humanity ends in losing it himself. The society in which both men and women are self-reliant and yet are truly supportive of each other is a truly democratic society.

In a democratic set up, the individual is the primary factor. In society, it is the group. We aim at creating a democratic society. It will be a society in which a woman will enjoy a status equal to that of man and even as a human person her role will be of equal status with man, not just in principle but in actual practice as well. Today, she is, in principle, a citizen with a status equal to that of man. Even today it is the cardinal principle of a truly democratic society that old men, children, the suffering and women must be safe in that set up. The question of the children is altogether different for they are mostly dependent on others. But, old men and suffering people also, sometimes, exhibit supreme and radiant strength. If it is suggested to an Hindu orthodox suffering man that his life might be saved if he consumed beef, the old man would rather die. If the old man lying on the road uncared for and grievously injured in a car accident were told that he would be safely hospitalised provided he gave up uttering the name of his favourite God, he might prefer death on the road, neglected and deserted. After all, the strength of man is embodied in his mind or spirit, not in his body or in the weapon he wields. Sword in hand, the brave warrior goes to the battlefield. But if he finds his sword broken into pieces, he pounces, weaponless, on his armed opponent. Ultimately a man's courage rests in his mind and heart, not in his weapons or body. We do not know as to when woman was disarmed. But that does not mean that she should be a coward. Courage is the

quality of the heart, not of the body. It is necessary that she should always remember this.

Who will create such conditions for the woman? The answer is obvious, the woman herself. The people of India had no arms. It was the unarmed Gandhi, who created a situation in which courage became manifest. A man is afraid of another man, a woman may be afraid of another woman. But every woman is afraid of every man; this is the real disease. There are two solutions for this. First, the woman must be prepared to sacrifice her very life to save her honour and, second, she must not consider herself as impure, unchaste or fallen, if she is raped. The progeny from such mishaps will be considered God's offsprings. This will naturally obliterate the pride of pure blood and chosen race. All children in the society will be considered to be of equal, high birth.

The woman will contribute to her own upliftment by her own efforts and courage. When a new ideology emerges in the society, its originator usually is not a group but an individual. Formalisation occurs much later, when institutions and organisations appear. Raja Rammohan Roy vowed to abolish 'Sati'. Traditionally, from ancient times, it was looked upon as a sacred custom. Thinkers like the learned idealist with a poetic mind, K. Ananda Kumarswami, had justified it; Bhagini Nivedita admired it. Yet, Raja Rammohan Roy, with his keen and subtle vision, noticed the inequality of that custom. He raised and led a movement against it. Noticing the subjugation and helplessness of the widows in our society, men like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Acarya Agarkar, Mahadeo Govind Ranade raised a protest against the prohibition of widow marriage. In England, John Stuart Mill, the great votary of democracy, worked hard for the emancipation of women. Those who took up cudgels against untouchability were themselves caste Hindus. Similarly, man too can initiate the movement for the emancipation of the women. In fact, he has started it, but it will succeed only when women will be filled with inner inspiration and indomitable hope.

Emancipated Women are Free from the Concept of Man-Woman

Today, we need women who are courageous and possess the desire to achieve the ideal of emancipation. There are so many

unmarried men in the world, but not all of them are held in high esteem. Men like Vinoba (Bhave) Shankarrao (Deo), Anna (Sahastrabuddhe) and Appa (Patwardhan) are respected because they lived a dedicated life. This is modern *Brahmacharya*. The wife of Jawaharlal (Nehru) and that of Dheberbhai died in their youth. But, they did not remarry. The honour they receive is for their lives of restraint and purity. A woman will not evolve in strength by merely remaining unmarried. She must become independent. i.e. self-reliant. Such a woman transcends the polarity of the feelings of being woman and man. This does not mean that these women will neither be women nor men, and so would be eunuchs. On the contrary, they would be both women as well as men. The great men who worked for the uplift of women had identified themselves with the role of woman. They were on the level of pure humanhood. They were both men as well as women. Women such as the Queen of Jhansi, Dr. Annie Besant, Ma Anandamayi had transcended the polarity of woman and man and, hence, could achieve fruition in their lives. Such women naturally possessed the strength to sacrifice.

Let us take an example from our own country. When we could not face Britain without arms, Gandhiji taught us the art of saving our self-respect without arms. Out of the 35 crore people, how many sacrificed their lives? Even then it had its effect. Society will change completely if women come forward to sacrifice their lives to save their honour. Such a sacrifice would not need a large number. A single plant with fragrant flowers fills the entire garden with a sweet aroma. With courage, a woman can realise the full potential of her personality. Her life will be revolutionised.

Young boys and girls are both members of the Shanti Sena today. The men in the Shanti Sena are in search of non-violent methods of restoring peace. Non-violent methods must be based on love and sweetness. Ruthlessness and cruelty are never the virtues of the brave. A person, who is not moved by another's grief, is not a *sthitapradnya*. He would be heartless. He remains completely untouched and as clean as a concrete road. But this is the sign of lifelessness, not of life.

Signs of Courage

On the other hand, the heart of a woman is weak. She is agonised and pained at the grief of others. In her, there is more pain than

compassion. A woman who faints when she sees someone being operated on is called delicate and sensitive. But this is not the softness of heart; this is weakness. There are so many expert lady-surgeons today. That does not mean that they have a brave heart. It might as well suggest that her sensitivities are blunted and her heart desensitised.

To sum up, sensitivity of heart and beauty of bearing are the characteristics of courage. These virtues are neither feminine nor masculine. This is a distinctive speciality of mankind. Members of the Shanti Sena, whether men or women, must cultivate these virtues. Again dedication, determination, fortitude and courage are neither feminine nor masculine virtues. Woman had so far completely handed over her selfhood to man which made her more loyal to the man than truthful to her own essence. Harishchandra and Ramchandra, in the pursuit of their convictions, did not hesitate to respectively kill and sacrifice their wives. We do not come across such incidents in the lives of women. She may sacrifice her son for her husband, for she regards her wifehood as her essence. She has no other aim in life. Will a woman ever save the life of her husband at the cost of her chastity? The uncompromising sense of self-respect – not pride that characterises a brave man – must become part of a woman's life too. Only then will a life of real togetherness or fellowship between the two emerge.

In the past, whatever status was enjoyed by the woman was due to man. If she was a queen, it was because she was the wife of the king. Today, she has become a citizen in her own right. She has achieved a social status on her own. She can, on her own, occupy the chair of the President or the Prime Minister. She need not take a man's support for it. Even then there is a vast difference between the independence of an ordinary woman and an ordinary man and an extraordinary woman and an extraordinary man. The mother is not as independent as the father. We are the offsprings of both our parents. We have the same faith in the mother as we have in the father. It is my firm conviction that the self-confidence and strength of the father can be engendered in the mother as well. In the mother that power is in a dormant state. It must become manifest. Man's efforts will not wake up this dormant power; woman alone must strive for that dawn. Then alone an integrated personhood of the whole humanhood will manifest itself. Some have described this a humanhood of a superman

and others as a superior man, but he is neither. He is, in fact, the common and normal, integrated human being.

The Last Hope

When Jamanalaji (Bajaj) started the Mahila Ashram, his wife, Janakidevi, had expressed the hope that even from among women there must emerge a Gandhi or a Vinoba. It is Vinobaji's hope that a 'Shankaracharya' should rise from among the women. Today we have these instances of ideal men as ideal human beings. We are awaiting a moment when examples of ideal women will be cited as those of ideal human beings. Then we might express the hope that there must emerge someone from among men who is as great as this or that woman. I have cherished this hope in my heart for years. It does not bloom with man's heroism, it needs supreme heroism on the part of the women. The women of the past generations were orthodox. They are now a part of the dead. All hopes are centered round the young girls of the modern age. It will be their valour and heroism that will bring about a revolution in the life of the woman. Let me lay at the feet of that young girls of the new age this hope I have nourished and cherished for the last forty years.

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Appendix I

Questions And Answers

Question: According to you, a change in man's view or opinion forms the basis of a revolution. This means that a man's opinion is subject to change. His mind is known for its fickleness; his mind too is continuously changing. In a situation like this, if there is no stable and permanent foundation, such as that of God, Brahma or the truth, his whole life stands the risk of being shaky, without foundation and contingent. When each one has a different bent, why would anyone accept another's point of view? And then the very foundation of changing opinion might disappear.

Analysis: Let us try to understand the question. Each man's mind works differently. Even then, there is something like a common human nature. It is neither exclusively that of women or of men. There is a common human nature for both men and women. It is on this basis that a society discriminates between good and evil. If anybody behaves with cruelty and wickedness, others blame him for that. But when others behave with similar savagery and cunning, even formerly

depraved persons call them vicious. This means that there are certain common criteria of vice and virtue. These are universal too. These regulate human conduct. Therefore, life is not foundationless or unstable or transitory. Every moment is pregnant with an everlasting novelty. On account of their typical life-style, women have developed a certain mindset. As long as the characteristics of the woman's mindset are non-antagonistic to human nature, they are acceptable. But, when those characteristics go against human nature, they deserve to be abolished. For instance, one of the awards with which a man is honoured for his good actions, is woman. In order to tempt Nachiketa, Yamaraj, the Lord of Death, seeks to entice him with awards, more precious than gold medal and diamond medal, which includes women. 'You will never get such beautiful women, these chariots, these horses in the mortal world,' says Yamaraj. The woman is comparable with chariots and horses. This is an insult to woman's humanity. This is a vicious cultivation of the mind although its authorship goes to Yamaraj. Human mind is fickle but it also possesses the faculty of reason. Reason is that faculty which makes you aware of what is good and bad for you, and the capacity to discriminate between truth and falsehood. This is man's conscience. It is there both in man and woman. Therefore, both must announce that the implication of what Yamaraj says is most undesirable. God, Brahma, truth—these are profound subjects and serious too. I do not feel it is necessary to discuss them in the present context.

Question: *Thanks to the scientific process, different nations and societies are today coming closer to each other. Other worlds such as the moon are also being sought to be reached. There is then every likelihood that we might establish contact with the other worlds. Will this contact and contagion affect human mind in a desirable or undesirable way?*

Analysis: We expect the human mind to be impartial and non-attached. In fact, this is its natural state. There is reasonableness in impartiality. That is the purity of the mind. But this does not mean that we have a mind that is incapable of receiving new impressions and thoughts. A human mind is dynamic. It will always have the capacity to change. It is sensitive and receptive to beauty. Such a mind will grow and develop through contact. We came into contact with Islam. If we could link the doctrine of social equality, so central

to Islam, with our concept of regarding everything as our selves (*aatmavat sarvabhuteshu*) our mind is bound to grow and enlarge. It was the British Rule that introduced human equality in this country, both in the law courts and the Constitution. It was the Europeans who brought with them the Christian incentive for the service of humanity and forgiveness to sinners. We shall be a more civilised society if we could assimilate those motivations into our cow protection movement and non-vegetarianism. Thus, man needs a pure mind and practices which are good. The characteristics of a pure mind are the same as those of common human nature. The mutual impact through the cooperation of self-confident men and women with these characteristics is bound to be salutary for both.

Question: *We take the position that all family relationships should be extended to the society. Why then exempt the relationship of husband and wife?*

Analysis: Let us not ignore the moot point. We shall not introduce into the familiistic society the present foundation of the institution of family. Instead, we shall provide the basis of love. The institution of family originates in marriage and love plays an important role in it. Love is not indispensable for marriage. It is not necessary that every love is translated into marriage. Where there is no smoke there might be no fire; but there can be fire without smoke. We shall accept the principle of love in the institution of family but reject the superficial, physical basis of that institution. In marriage, even if love dominates, there is the sexual urge. This sexual urge must not be extended to the society. Therefore, the relationship of wife and husband will be restricted to the family, not just the relationship but also the feeling. In the family, all relationships except those of husband and wife are non-sexual. Affinity is the main basis of these relationships. That must be extended to the society. This is the acceptable value of the institution of family.

In the family, the relationships of mother, father, brother, sister are natural, blood relationships. Birth is their basis and sexual contact is the basis of birth. We do not wish even these relationships to be extended to society. But motherhood, fatherhood, brotherhood, sisterhood, though determined by birth are saturated with love. There is neither lust nor fear in these relationships. Therefore, these

relationships ought to be expanded in the familial society. In the family there is no room for reward and punishment and value or exchange. This ought to happen in the familial society. In the familistic society there will be no remuneration for labour nor will labour be sold. Even commodities will not be for sale. The incentive for work will not flow either from the desire for reward or fear of punishment. Men will work spontaneously according to their capacities for mutual satisfaction and joy.

The administration and control in the family is not formal. Mother-father, brother-sister, daughter-sister all do their duties spontaneously out of regard and feeling for each other. This automatically produces a system and a natural regulation. This is a very significant value for a stateless society.

In our society, presently, the family devolves around property. The heir to the property is either the legitimate or the adopted son or daughter. This too is an extraneous value. It obstructs love, creates bad blood among relatives. Therefore, people thought of rooting out from the family the very sense of possession. In this way, we must adopt and preserve for the familistic society, family values which are acceptable and relationships which we can develop in the society.

We can also consider such issues as to whether the family should be matriarchal or patriarchal, whether the family will be known after the name of the mother or that of the father, whether the children will belong to the family, or the society. The mother and father have the same and equal status in the society as far as citizenship is concerned. Adult boys and girls too are equal from this angle. But the foundation of the conduct and action in the family is not one's right but one's affinity and one's sense of duty. Therefore, whether it will be matriarchal or patriarchal is irrelevant. Even today, the family does not take the entire responsibility of the children. No parents can kill their children. They cannot deprive them of education. This means that parents cannot treat their children according to their whims and caprices. This attitude must be nurtured. And at the same time the love and affinity of the parents must continue as ever. The relationship of the mother with her child is of profound social value that defies adequate comprehension. We cannot afford to lose it at any cost. If the entire society is family (then) the sentiment of motherhood and fatherhood will be inherent in society. Thanks to parental love and social

guardianship, the life of the children will be doubly blessed.

Question: *On account of natural differences, a woman is helpless. After all nature cannot be wished away. What could we do about it?*

Analysis: We have seen that man's life is less natural and more cultural. Man's heroism consists of not yielding to nature. There are the naturally blind, the deaf, the stupid. But man does not wash his hands off them by throwing them to the care of nature. We seek to compensate their incapacity caused by their handicap. The drawbacks of nature are sought to be removed or reduced to the minimum. The common humanity of woman and man is, of course, natural. As common humanity grows and develops, the natural handicaps will be increasingly compensated for.

Question: *If the relationship between woman and man becomes totally free of all inhibitions, will it not lead to promiscuity and licence?*

Analysis: We are contemplating a familistic society. This is a society in the place of the family based on birth and marriage. There will be familistic freedom in it as well as limitations to emotional relationships. Hence, the possibility of assault and outrage will be reduced to the minimum. The self-confident woman of character will be heroic, she will not succumb to pelf and power. She will not regard her body as an object for enjoyment and her charms as her fortune. Even today, we notice that men, whose wealth and lust are severely limited, have least to fear from thieves and robbers. Similarly it is not easy to outrage such a woman. The very desire for rape will diminish. Today, in the society, even in the family, between individuals the sentiment of pure love appears to be on the wane, while that of domination is waxing. This thirst for securing domination over the oceans and earth predominates in the mind of Alexander or any other Emperor. On the other hand, among the spiritually realised men such as Buddha, Jesus or others like them, it is the sentiment of kinship and affinity that overpowers. This is a human feeling. Not that it is in any way meant for the spiritually enlightened men only. The feeling will be the foundation of our social values. All familistic sentiments will finally consummate into unconditional and sacred friendship.

Question: *There is a young girl, who wants to involve herself in some social work. Her parents do not allow her to step out of the home. She is unmarried. What should she do?*

Analysis: This young girl must endure, in humility and love, the opposition of her parents till she conquers the fear in their minds. When the parents feel confident that their daughter is capable of protecting herself and that she conducts herself within the limits of modesty, their opposition will automatically dissolve and cooperation will commence. So many weddings take place against the wishes of the parents. To begin with, the parents boycott their son and daughter-in-law, but if the newly marrieds have humility, reasonableness and affection, the natural love and trust of the parents manifests itself and then relations become normal.

Question: *There was matriarchy in Kerala. But now it is limited. In Burma (Myanmar) women work more than men. In some regions polyandry is still in vogue. How is it then that the human society remained patriarchal?*

Analysis: This was obviously due to the fact that the woman sought safety and regarded man as her saviour. Hence, her life developed under the shadow of man. Whether matriarchy or patriarchy, the woman has been able to save her self-respect only with the help of man. Therefore, man must have a greater power. Even today she works more than man and yet her life is tethered to man's. Even under polyandry, she is the collective property of all men. Her husbands are not her property, for it is she who needs protection. Even under polygamy, the man, the husband, is the protector and guardian of all the women.

Question: *What is the difference between celibacy (Brahmacharya) and restraint (Saiyyam)? Is Brahmacharya the aim of man's life?*

Analysis: I have explained *Brahmacharya* from a social perspective. I consciously avoided a deep meditative and theistic attitude. The discussion on *Brahmacharya* was limited to the issue that a woman's body must never be an object of enjoyment for man. This condition is necessary so that both may live fearlessly and without anxiety. No woman should make another woman, nor a man another man, a means of his pleasure. Otherwise, the two individuals cannot live together in freedom. There must be freedom, cooperation and sanctity in the lives of both. The desire for exploitation must not be

there. When we apply this principle to the lives of women and men, it amounts to *Brahmacharya*.

This is not sexual restraint. This is a different kind of restraint, socially necessary, so that women and man can live in fellowship. Even in the fellowship of husband and wife restraint is necessary. But such a restraint is unconditional. The woman must not regard the man's body as a means of protection, man must not feel that a woman's body is an object of enjoyment. Such *Brahmacharya* is necessary for fellowship.

Faith in the supreme consciousness becomes necessary when *Brahmacharya* is individualistic. People develop an attitude of non-attachment so that they can meditate upon the supreme consciousness. I have not dealt with this here. Profound thinkers usually have attained such *Brahmacharya*. Newton, Archimedes had such concentration of thought that they used to forget everything else. They used to even forget to have their meals. This is pure concentration. Similarly, the person, whose consciousness is pervaded with the realisation of the supreme, remains in a state of trance forever. It is very difficult to describe such men. There is an anecdote regarding Newton's concentration of mind. He had a pet cat with its young kittens. Newton was deeply engrossed in his experiments. He thought that his pet cat could enter and leave his laboratory at will through the large hole in the door but he realised that now it had become necessary to make additional holes for the young ones. Thus an additional small hole was made into the door. What concentration this!

An important problem is linked with this discussion. Isn't *Brahmacharya*, that compels us to suppress our senses, both unnecessary and inimical both to an individual and to society?

Suppression, whatever its type, is always harmful. But restraint, that is to say, a responsible and rational use of the body, is a different matter. In suppression there is more force than reason. Therefore, the scriptures use two words, '*shama*' (calm) and '*dama*' (suppression). Suppression means only outward restraint. The body has been forcefully brought under control:

*Kamendriyani saiyamya ya aaste mansa smaran
Indriyathanuimoodhatma mithyacharaha se ucchate.*

(The person who exercises only outward restraint, and continues inwardly to think of carnal pleasures, in fact, indulges in deceitful conduct). The *Bhagvadgeeta* describes this as *mithyachar* or counterfeit conduct. Suppression is an outward restraint of the organs of the body, while the mind continues to indulge in thoughts of carnal enjoyment. This suppression makes for a diseased mind. The individual does not have a quiet, healthy mind. Freud refers to this kind of restraint as suppression. This suppression is like covering with dust the embers of lust which continue to burn beneath. The embers are bound to erupt sooner or later. If they do not, the suppression will bruise the mind. Therefore this kind of suppression is not salutary for anybody.

Next, we must consider if extreme celibacy is in social interest. Here, thinkers differ. But let us keep in mind that the foundation of the institution of marriage is also celibacy or *Brahmacharya*. A marriage that has been truly consummated is one in which conjugal love has taken precedence over carnal passion.

The relationship of husband and wife would be governed more by love than restraint. Other relationships are obviously based on love. It is only this relationship between husband and wife that is based on physical contact. Other relationships too do have an element of physical contact but the one between husband and wife is of a carnal nature. This is a very intimate relationship and, hence, love must have the upper hand and sexuality becomes secondary. Thinking in terms of restraint too, is secondary. It might make both of them rather flawed in their personalities. But as love grows, physicality will automatically diminish.

Question: *We have in our mind a society without varnas and castes. But what about the ashram system? What will be the distinctive characteristics of Hinduism when varnas and ashramas are abolished?*

Analysis: I cannot tell what distinctive characteristic will remain. In fact, we do not consider that any such distinctive characteristic is necessary at all. After prolonged thinking, I have come to the conclusion that Hindu society cannot progress unless and until the castes and the *varnas* are eradicated. The *varna* cannot be based on *gunas* and *karma* (qualities and work). The new born baby is brought up not in accordance with its qualities and work but according to its caste at birth. We can decide about the qualities and action of a man only

posthumously. As regards *varna*, in my view, we must forthwith, without any further delay, come to the conclusion that there must be nothing like *varna* in the society. This is absolutely necessary for human equality. There is one more aspect worthy of consideration. We cannot think of a woman purely on the basis of qualities and work. *Varna* belongs only to man. How shall we decide about the qualities and work of a woman? She performs only two duties, cooking and procreation. These functions are common to the entire womanhood. In addition to these, the tasks of grinding, fetching water and washing clothes are performed in every household. Qualities and work thus cannot decide a woman's *varna*, either among the Hindus or Muslims. Women's rights were being discussed in the Constituent Assembly. Quite a few Muslim friends were sitting around me. Among them was one Begum Rasul, who occasionally spoke about women's rights; she maintained that women should have this right and that right. The other Muslim friends wondered as to what the lady was saying. 'Is there any religion for woman?' A woman is a woman. All women in the world are equal. If she weds a Muslim, she becomes a Muslim. She will adopt the house she enters. In Islam man alone, not woman, is baptized. In Christianity there are certain rituals in respect of women, but then they have no castes. In this way there are few rituals for women in some religions. But, woman herself is ranked with the Shudras, the lowest among the four castes. It is her birth that determines her caste, not her qualities and work. She gets the caste of the family in which she is born.

There are some ascetic women (Sadhvis, Bhikkunis) among the Buddhists and the Jains. But, on the whole, we do not come across a woman who adopted the house of the guru (teacher) for her studies. The education of women became a problem. There were learned women here indeed, but there is hardly any instance of women having stayed for education in the house of a teacher.

As a corollary, there was no thread ceremony for women. The Arya Samajists started the thread ceremony for women. In Maharashtra, one Gajanan Bhaskar Vaidya founded a Hindu Reform Society that too performed the thread ceremony for women. Broadly speaking, however, there was no ritual for women except marriage.

Even the ashram system does not provide for women the stage

of *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) and renunciation (*Sanyasa*). Even after the ritual of the thread ceremony, this ineligibility does not go. Here *Brahmacharya* denotes the study of Vedas. The Arya Samajists started this. Even earlier, it was started by Brahmo Samaj and Prathana Samaj. In the meantime, the Theosophical Society too had done some work in this context.

What perturbed all these thinkers was the fact that in our social system, the laws governing men do not apply to women. Women had neither the scope nor the right to learn. Later on, they were given Vedic education by societies such as Arya Samaj. If Annie Besant could study the Vedas, why not other women? The Arya Samaj was founded later than the Theosophical Society. Formerly, the woman was entitled to only one *ashram* i.e., householdership on marriage. On the completion of eight years she used to be wedded. And that was also treated as her entry into the guru's house. For the men, the period between eight and twenty was considered as *Brahmacharyashram*. But the woman after completing eight years, used to go to her husband's home and that was her thread ceremony. Her education was limited to learning of the rituals of her husband's home. Hence, an eight-year-old girl could be married to a *Brahmachari* (celibate) of twenty. This was the old system.

What was the situation at birth of the system of the four Varnas? We have in the *Vedas* names of women such as Gargi, Maitreyi, Katyayani, etc. Of these Katyayani and Maitreyi were the wives of Yadnyavalkya. These examples offer no proof of thread ceremony in connection with women. There was no difference between women and Shudras as far as the *sanskars* (rituals) went. Neither were entitled to perform Vedic rituals nor were they allowed to study the *Vedas*. It is our tradition that a religious ritual performed by a woman is devoid of any Vedic verse (*mantra*).

Four Ashramas (The four stages of life)

The wife is regarded as a companion-in-religion (*sahadharmini*). She has no religion of her own. The religion of her husband is also her religion. But even according to the man's religious requirement, Subhadra did not accompany Arjun on the battlefield, nor did Uttara accompany Abhimanyu or Sita, Ram on the field of battle. At the

time of war, even the Kshatriya women or wives of princes either wept or else sacrificed their lives. Vaishya women did not earn wealth on their own.

The natural difference between woman and man will remain. No one can eradicate that difference. But we wish that despite this difference, the common humanhood between them must develop. The woman will remain a woman and the man, a man, but both will become human. Woman today is deprived of an opportunity to become a human being. She must be educated for that and not for the orientation she receives in her husband's home. Her acquisition in the home of the husband, of training in cooking, child rearing, washing and knitting is not sufficient. She must be literate and receive a liberal education as well. But women do not receive such an education. It is often argued that Sanskrit be made the national language since that is the mother of all languages. I do not know if Sanskrit was ever in the past the common language at all. In ancient literature, in Sanskrit plays, we find men using Sanskrit, but the women spoke in Prakrit (the layman's language). Sita talks to Ramchandraji in Prakrit.

Women must receive a higher education so that this difference is eradicated. Except for training in motherhood and related fields, the education for women and men must be largely common. It is a different matter that women may not be able to put in heavy physical labour. The onus of motherhood is on her. There are two types of work; manual labour and menial work. But today all menial labour in the home is performed by her. Cleaning, fetching water, grinding, sweeping; all these chores devoid of dignity are today performed by a woman. And yet man never tires of arguing that woman is weak and hence should be relieved of heavy work. For man, menial work is below his dignity. If he acquires a bit of money he would rather forbid his wife from doing these chores. Even in the home of a professional cook, it is his wife who does the cooking; he does not cook at home. A professional water-fetcher may fetch water for others, but in his own home, it is his wife, not he, who does that work. A man may work as a servant in your house, but in his own house it is the wife, who is his servant. This difference in labour between woman and man must come to an end. Cooking food and serving it to others is in itself a noble thing, as it provides nourishment. It is productive labour and

preservative labour. A man may save another's life with a weapon or a doctor may save a man with medicine, but these are examples of indirect preservation of life. But one who saves you from hunger and cold directly saves your life. Hence, there is no labour in the world, except the food-producing labour of the farmer which could be compared with cooking. It is work that preserves life. Women should consider it their privilege and man should feel absolutely no indignity in it.

Today man cooks to earn a living. He is not a cook in his own home. At the time of performing the Rajasuya Yajna, the work of cooking was entrusted to Bhima, who possessed the strength of a thousand elephants. Hence, there may be a difference of heavy and light work between women and men. But there should be no other difference except, of course, the education in motherhood.

Brahmacharya Ashram (The stage of celibacy)

Both should be entitled to Brahmacharya or a celibate life. It is a different matter whether, for Brahmacharyashram, we should have teacher-home (*guru-griha*, a residential teaching institution run by an outstanding teacher) as in the past or ashrams as we have them now. For the present, perhaps the boys and the girls might have to live separately; but a time must come, sooner rather than later when there will be co-living with co-education. Co-living is essential for co-labour, co-education and co-dining.

What will be the nature of this Brahmacharyashram? In the ancient teacher-homes (*gurukools*) and hermitages (*ashrams*), the Brahmacharis (students) lived along with the wife and daughters of the teacher. This practice should continue. This is needed to develop the familial ambience. Young boys and girls live in hostels and learn in schools and colleges. But they hardly ever come in contact with each other. The relationship of brother and sister must be cultivated in their hearts. We see this kind of relationship even today in villages. When a girl given in marriage in another village returns to her parents, she is regarded as the daughter of the entire village. Such familial feeling must be nurtured through our educational institutions.

How shall we introduce sanctity along with the extension of this familistic feeling? These are experiments demanding great courage.

Where there is an organisation and a certain regulation I am not referring to administration – it will be necessary to make certain rules that will be conducive to the growth of familial feeling between man and woman. All schools must become familial. The word familistic school was coined by Vinobaji, who used it in his *Maharashtra Dharma*. In such a school, the life of men and women should not be different, or, if at all, only slightly so. There should be no isolation. We can decide upon the limits of co-education. Everyone will experiment as much as his courage allows. All that is necessary is that there should not be much difference in the life-pattern of the two genders. Otherwise they would not get sufficiently acclimatised to living together and sacred fellowship out of the family may not be achievable. My repeated references to sanctity in fellowship is due to the fact that women and men live together even today, but they are embarrassed, shy, guilty and nervous about the fact. This is not living together. It should have more love, saturated with sanctity. In its own way, this is an education in Brahmacharya. This is realised through the conducive ambience and mostly through life itself.

Shri Aurobindo was the secretary of the first National Education Committee formed in 1906. He wrote a book on national education. There is a paragraph on moral education in it. It says that moral education cannot be imparted through words and books. Education through books and words is neither successful nor meaningful, because moral education is an orientation of the heart and there is a difference between the heart and head, 'precisely because the heart is not the head.' Intellectual education does not enrich the heart. True moral education is received through the surrounding environment, the individuals and the conditions that obtain in the surrounding and the lives of those individuals. Of course, moral education too, will have to be intellectual to a certain extent, but mainly it will be received through the environment. The boys and girls together must create this environment. Women and men, now, must live together without fear.

To a certain extent, fearlessness will be cultivated in the family itself. But as early as the age of five, the child goes to a formal school of some kind. Institutions like these do not facilitate the cultivation of fearlessness. Therefore, the whole society will be destroyed and corrupted. There will be no sanctity in it. The stage of celibacy (*Brahmacharyashram*) should be equally applicable to boys and girls.

The ideals of Brahmacharya will have to be cultivated, not in a life of separation, but in fellowship and togetherness. Co-education is imperative. Fellowship or togetherness may be limited in accordance with the requirements of time and capacity and also in accordance with the courage on the part of the Head of the institution and the students as well. This will require moral determination on the part of the students. Adult students must consciously will that they learn and live together. Or else, the University authorities might come forward with a system and the students might take it as a 'golden chance' only. This must not happen. This will not produce pure fellowship. Therefore fellowship needs a morally conscious determination on the part of the boys and girls.

Grihashthram (The Stage of the Householder)

Next is *Grihashthram* or the householder's life. Here, the main foundation must be love. The greater the love, the lesser the physicality. It is the child that provides the great opportunity to reduce carnality during *Grihashthram*. The life of the mother and father is completely centered on the child. The woman's womanhood and the man's manhood merge and dissolve into motherhood and fatherhood, respectively. Any sacrifice made for the child is no sacrifice, it is pure joy.

Hospitality is the second distinctive characteristic of *Grihashthram*. Charity or donation is a different matter. There is no charity in hospitality. In fact, there should be no need for charity in the society; and the need for service too must be at its minimum. Everyone should be free from poverty and disaster. Service becomes necessary in a disaster and charity in poverty. The need for both must disappear from the world. If so, what do we mean by hospitality? It means receiving the family guest as if he were our kin. Fellowship must be the means of family cooperation. The arrival of a guest makes us happy as we shall now have an outsider living with us as one of our own.

Hospitality enlarges the family. But this hospitality must not be merely formal, it should be full of love. Its familial element will be in direct proportion to the affection that is felt. Affection is a great thing. Each one of us cook fine delicacies in our homes. In fact, you may

have more of them. But you casually call on me and I am immeasurably happy to see you. I offer you the best delicacy that I have. This spirit must be there in each family and deserves to be inculcated in each institution.

It is our endeavour to make educational institutions familistic. But, the contrary is happening today. The mechanical attitude of the institutions is being cultivated in the family. I have stayed with families with facilities better than those in the Taj Hotel. Every couple of hours, the cook used to enquire as to what I would like to eat. The chauffeur queried if I wanted to go out. But, I could meet my host only twice, once when I arrived and then when I left, when he had come to the car to see me off. While bidding farewell he told me that he was very happy that I stayed with him and now that I was leaving he was feeling the wrench of parting. When I was his guest, he was happy in his own room and yet he was unhappy at my departure. Is there any humanity, friendship and affection in this?

Therefore, I do not refer to external facilities when I talk of hospitality. In the society that we are talking about, there will be the basic facilities and these facilities will have the aroma of familistic affection. The familistic spirit must be introduced in the institution but the mechanical attitude in the institution should never be allowed to enter into the family. We need this kind of change today. After all, it is the family that trains women and men for fellowship. *Grihashthashram* is the master key of the society. Its place is like that of the Sun in the scheme of the four ashramas. For, it is the nursery of social values.

Vanaprasthashram (The Stage of Retirement)

Next is *Vanprasthashram* which is like the stage of retirement (from the active concerns of life). Here too, formerly the main decision rested with the man; the woman only consented. Even in *Sanyas* (renunciation) the wife's permission was only sought, and yet she could not live with him. During *Vanaprastha* she could live with her husband. Today the familistic spirit has become coextensive with the society. Here our son is no longer our own, all boys in the society are our sons and all girls, our daughters. Such enlargement of the familistic sentiment creates familistic relationships in the society. A certain man and a certain woman had married and lived as husband and wife at

some time. This relationship would leave behind certain symbols. But now, they are no longer husband and wife. They are both now *Vanaprasthis*. Here it is fellowship that dominates their lives. They are friends of each other.

Today, with a larger proportion of adult spinsters in society we feel the need for the *Vanaprasthi* as never before. Girls who receive University education, will they not have parents outside their families? The young girls and adult virgins who are either taking education or doing social work must have the confidence that they have many parents in the society.

Hence, now, the *Vanaprasthi* will not retire to the forest. Stepping out of his family, he will go into the society. This familistic spirit will not spread if he retires to the forest. It should be so strong among women and men of declining years that the relationship of husband-wife whether in the home or outside, should completely disappear. They must lose themselves in the spirit of motherhood and fatherhood. That will create in the society a sense of confidence and assurance for the young boys and girls. When this atmosphere will pervade the entire society, *Vanaprastha* will become a social value. This must begin with the educational institutions.

Sanyasashram (The Stage of Renunciation)

Last is *Sanyas* - Renunciation. There are no renunciated ascetics - *Sanyasis* - in our society today. But they ought to be there. One of the meanings of the word *Sanyasi* is 'the highest individual'. The individual who is free from desire to acquire anything for himself automatically transcends society. In the obituary which I wrote on the demise of Kishorlalbhai (Mashruwala), I had remarked that he (Kishorlalbhai) represented the 'power of Vashistha' in society. It was this power of Rishi Vashistha that governed the kingdom of Ram. There is a constitutional provision today that a Judge is above everything, even above the Parliament. The Parliament has the power to make laws. It can also provide for the *modus operandi* about the appointment of the Judges. But once the appointment has been made, even the President will not have power over a Judge. He is above all external power. Ram Shastri was the Judge, when Raghoba Peshwa caused the assassination of his own nephew. Ram Shastri was asked about

Raghoba's punishment. Ram Shastri gave the reply that as per scriptural provisions there was only one punishment for murder and it was death by hanging. "I am the king and the punishment must have my sanction", retorted Raghoba in anger. "I am giving this judgement," continued Ram Shastri, impassively and calmly, "that you must be punished with death by hanging. I shall not take even a drop of water in a state where the assassin is not punished in accordance with justice. Slit my tongue, if you will, but I shall announce the same punishment and no other." With these words he left the state.

One who has no axe to grind, who has no life of his own, who has become a social being, alone can be such an independent judge. Vinoba used to consider such an individual a Universal Man. He has no nation of his own, no society, nor family. Thus, he has gone beyond the three respective qualities. This is one of his characteristics.

Customarily, the sanyasis drop their former name. Women drop their earlier name on marriage and men do so on taking *sanyas*! This means that his citizenship has come to an end. It is his civic death. Taking to the forest is an outward process. Civic death suggests that he does not know or expect anything of society. 'I shall work not for my living since I have nothing to live for.' Therefore, he changes his name. The name may not be changed in future, but he must be fully convinced that he has no vote as such. There is nobody in society that represents him, nor does he represent anybody. There must be some such individuals in the society whose word will be law. Even the stray thoughts of such people have the quality of scriptural advice. They just cannot talk anything else. They render discipline to the society. It is said that in the kingdom of Ram the ascetic will not take to the forest. The sceptre should now be put into the hands of these *Yatis* or ascetics who demand nothing from the society. They expect nothing in exchange for the education, which they impart to the society. Such a person is looked upon as a *Sanyasi* by the society. Such persons will be few in number as they cannot be created through legal provisions.

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Appendix II

A Reply to the Critics

(During 1953-54 in Mumbai and Pune, Dada gave a series of lectures on Woman's Life. Three points i) Woman's aspiration for marriage, (ii) Her aspiration for motherhood, and iii) Her dependence on man, provoked a lot of discussion, both in favour and against, which was published in the weekly, Sadhana. Eminent persons such as Kakasaheb Barve, Shankarrao Deo, Ms. Maltibai Bedekar, Ms. Chandrakalabai Hate, Ms. Sitabai Parulekar took part in the discussions. Winding up the debate, Dada wrote an article in reply which is reproduced below: Publisher).

I have learned that a very lively and exciting discussion on the subject of *Woman's Life* has been going on in Maharashtra for the last six months. I consider it a great personal honour that my views in the matter received radical and careful attention. I feel a special sense of fulfilment that quite a few progressive, highly educated and enlightened women took part in the debate. Our elderly friend and relative, Shri Shankarrao Deo has made a valuable contribution to the debate by writing a critical and vigorous essay that mirrors his sincere anguish

about the issue. I have a sense of satisfaction that at least one conscientious person, dedicated to social service and enriched with true *Brahmacharya*, accorded importance to this subject of great concern by taking part in the discussion. The participation of a committed *Brahmacharini* would have indeed rendered a sense of greater consummation to this debate. As I was continuously travelling, I was able to go through only a few articles which, nevertheless, I found very enlightening. I am beholden to all those who have made this gift of enlightenment to me.

My Position

I do not want to give a reply to anybody, nor do I have the ability and stature to do so. It is usually my way to ponder with philosophical curiosity over the living issues in the contemporary society and to put across, in all sincerity and humility, my conclusions about them. In this context, I might only submit that the whole of the debate does not have a bearing upon my article. The 'story' or the news item continuously being referred to as my essay, has not been written or dictated by me. Although 'the story' might not actually have distorted my views, yet all the statements and words in it are not mine. Even when the words are mine, their sequence in the statement and the context in which they are used might cause an ambiguity in meaning. Some affectionate friends in Pune were kind enough to invite me and put to me in all humility a few questions. I gave my answers to these questions rather elaborately as per my understanding. The 'story' in *Sadhana* is, in fact, a collection of my replies. The collection has, as far as possible, tried not to do any injustice to my views. Nobody is to blame. But since it was necessary to bring to the readers' notice the true nature of the 'story', this submission was thought necessary.

Now, without seeking to offer any reply to any particular opinion, I am going to put across my viewpoint clearly and briefly.

I have been talking about what I felt and found convincing after due thought as son, brother, father and husband in respect of the status and life of the woman. Broadly speaking, there has been no distortion of my views in the news item in *Sadhana*. But there is a lot of linguistic ambiguity, leaving room for misunderstanding. I am convinced, after having read her article, that there should be no

difference of opinion between Ms. Maltibai Bedekar and myself. Perhaps she had no opportunity to read my version of what I meant and that has led her to draw certain inferences and make certain comments. Even then, I am broadly in agreement with the conclusion she has drawn while summing up her article. The recommendation which she has made regarding men is usually made by me too, when I address men's meetings. But, to make such a recommendation in women's meetings is, as I see it, not just unnecessary but also undesirable. I would emphatically submit that the life of the woman must be autonomous and self reliant.

A Life Independent of Man

I exhorted women to live a life which is not contingent or dependent upon men. 'A life not dependent upon men does not mean a life devoid of men'. Presently, a woman's education, her heroism, her work and her very life is not just subservient to man, but is geared entirely to the man. She is tethered to man. That this should not continue in her life, this is what the said pledge connotes. Woman should live with man, she should do so with love, but she must not be his parasite. Man lives with woman, but he is never her parasite. The woman aspires not just for man's company but also his support and protection. This is the fundamental difference between the two positions.

'Don't consider marriage as the be-all and end all of your life, *Saubhagyakanksha soda*'. I have often made such an appeal to women. But I have never said that they should give up their desire to get married. The aspiration for marriage is common to women and men. But the man who exercises restraint over his aspiration for marriage is respected. The same is not the case with respect to the woman. A spinster used to be regarded as inauspicious and lacking in sanctity. Even today her status is lower than that of a married woman, whose husband is alive. The entire sanctity and dignity in a woman's life consists in matrimony. This law does not apply to men. As a result there is not just a difference but a discrepancy in the moral and cultural ideals of the two. I do not wish to submit that with regard to marriage the status of both must be ideal and compatible. I would like to say that it should be easier for woman to enter into wedlock

and, hence, I suggest, it should be autonomous. I am yet to see where I went wrong in making this statement.

A Bit Vague

The statement, 'Give up the aspiration for motherhood' ascribed to me is, I must admit, a bit vague and does not convey the exact purport of what I have in my mind. Nowhere have I said that motherhood is not unique to woman or that her aspiration towards motherhood is not natural. I have never referred to the spaniel's ear in connection with woman's motherhood. But I do believe that the so-called natural virtues in the woman such as her timidity, her tenderness and her parasitical devotion to man are acquired through cultural conditioning. And, in that context, I believe that her motherhood is not just natural, but unique to her. But we cannot be oblivious to the fact that the familistic and social nature of her motherhood are as much relevant as are the natural and cultural aspects. A human being is not merely a natural animal. Therefore, there is room for the provision of restraint in his life. Restraint too is based in his particular nature. But, from that point of view, the aspiration for fatherhood on the part of man too is not merely cultural. If the aspiration of fatherhood is part of nature's scheme to secure continuity of the species then it will be wrong to assume that the aspiration for fatherhood is only cultural. I have never made light of the basic distinction between the woman's aspiration for motherhood and that of a man for fatherhood. Nor have I ever confused the two. I would, however, like to stress the point that the significance and value of *Brahmacharya* in the lives of both should be equal. Else, there will not just be difference but inequality between their moral ideals. In that case, it will be necessary to regard the mother as superior to the *Brahmacharini* or a celibate woman. The social convention that it is only in motherhood that a woman's life finds her fulfilment will go unchallenged. And then to realise that aspiration, the woman will have to go down on her knees before man. Her desire for matrimony will turn into an aspiration that regards marriage as the ultimate glory of a woman's life. Her position in respect of marriage will become secondary and subordinate. But the consideration of the extraneous difference between the aspiration for fatherhood and that for motherhood is not relevant here. Motherhood, though unique to

woman, should not in any way reduce the social and human status of the woman to a subordinate position.

Any discussion of anatomy and the science of motherhood-fatherhood has no relevance here. To believe for once that there is no fulfilment in woman's life except in motherhood is to put an end to her freedom, individuality and citizenship. This is the ineluctable conclusion from that premise.

Easy, Happy Motherhood

Some have noticed in my views the subtle suggestion that I am in favour of matrimony without motherhood. This is an injustice to me. I am of the opinion that a woman's motherhood, like her marriage, ought to be easy and happy and also autonomous. Yet let us not forget that the only basis of restraint between woman and man is *Brahmacharya*. What else, if not *Brahmacharya*, could be the foundation of the mutual commitment between married men and women? Just as *Brahmacharya* is the only basis of the restraint of an unmarried person, similarly *Brahmacharya* alone provides the foundation of the mutual loyalty and partial restraint in the relationship of married women and men. Let there be no doubt about this. Hence, this need not be further elaborated.

It is an absolutely baseless misunderstanding of my position when it is alleged as some do, that my views coincide with or are the same as those of the modern neo-feminists or advocates of women's liberation. The modern neofeminist does not accept the importance of *Brahmacharya* in the individual, familial or social life. For me, on the other hand, it is the very foundation of the mutual fellowship of women and men. Isn't it rather amazing that even as stark a difference as this is not properly grasped? The double standards of morality, viz., the moral ideal for man remains *Brahmacharya* while that for woman becomes motherhood, cannot continue in the society. This would lead to a hazardous social morality in which man pursues *Brahmacharya* and the woman tempts him by hook or crook to enter into matrimony. The woman will then have to be happy to play the part of Rambha, Menaka or Urvashi. Have I really erred if I said, as I did, that as the son of a woman I cannot tolerate this?

Equal Status

When I say that the status of woman and man must be equal. I do not suggest that the same must be uniform. But I do mean that it be compatible. Equality is not uniformity but, doubtlessly, compatibility. I have no intention to indulge in stupid and prankish efforts of obliterating the differences between woman and man. All I wish to assert is that we should never forget that both are human beings. A woman's freedom and citizenship are based on her distinction. Both are born of each other; how could we say that the characteristics of both are not inherited by both? We take pride in declaring that the exceptional hero with supreme valour like King Shivaji had inherited the virtues of his great mother. Is it then not likely that every man inherits his mother's virtues, and every woman, her father's. Nature is yet to produce an unmixed man and unmixed woman. Mother-father are merged like word and meaning. 'Half-woman and half-God' is not like a hero in the play called *Vichitravilasa*. He does not have a dreadful visage with moustache on the half lip, sacred *tilak* on one-half of the forehead and *bindi* on the other. His personhood is made up of the warp and weft of woman and man. The main distinction in the values of the fatherhood of man and the motherhood of woman is that the value of man's individuality does not depend upon his fatherhood. The fulfilment of his life is not in his fatherhood, while a woman is considered blessed only as somebody's mother. This situation does not change if we regard as blessed the mothers of Jijabai and Kunti instead of those of Shivaji and the Pandavas. The greatness of Kunti makes her mother great; the greatness of Jijamata makes her mother great. Thus, it is only as somebody's mother, even that of a woman, that the woman achieves greatness while man is great just because he is man. Because of this, woman is not entitled to *Brahmacharya* and renunciation. It is motherhood that is inevitably and inexorably provided for her. That makes matrimony indispensable. Her aspiration to see life's fulfilment in wedlock is the symbol of her secondary and subordinate status.

Changing Social Morality

There is one more point to be considered. A woman can become a mother even without her consent. In this context the first revolutionary

change in our social morality will be the creation of a conviction that physical outrage does not pollute a person. If anybody forces beef into your mouth without your consent you are not thereby automatically proselytized. This is as regards the moral consequence. But what about motherhood which is a physical consequence? The second change which we must bring about in our social policy is that no child will be considered a bastard and unholy. The incident of unwanted motherhood would decline in proportion as the woman becomes self-projected, heroic and independent of man. People, who would dare outrage a woman, who is ever prepared to sacrifice her life to save the sanctity of the essence of her being, would be rare in any society. In her anxious seeking of protection, woman made herself an easy prey to outrage and, in the process, became obsessed with her body. If her life is not parasitical on man it means that the woman will cease to depend upon man for her protection. This is the crux of the determination to live a life that is not dependent upon man.

Woman's Perception: Final Testimony

Finally it is the self-confidence of women that is going to determine the role and the social value of the life of the woman. For all my logical analysis, it would be her perception that must be accepted as the final testimony. If educated and enlightened women too are allergic to or unprepared for freedom, citizenship and an autonomous life, (then) they must be honest enough to say so. If she recoils from a life of *Brahmacharya* and renunciation (then) she must aspire to be reborn as man so that she can attain full human development of her personality. It would be penance in this birth that might entitle her in the next birth, to mundane and spiritual salvation. Till then she must be satisfied with a dominion status. In that case, her freedom will be within the four walls of the family and her citizenship will be mere child's play. On this, we would only like to submit that just as we are not prepared to accept untouchability, inspite of its Vedic sanction, in the same way, we shall not acquiesce to a subordinate status of the woman, even if traditional morality, social convention and cultural convictions sanction it.

Nevertheless, the cultural symbol of motherhood enhances man. If, hereafter every man thoughtfully decides to regard his mother not

as the wife of his father, and his own wife as the mother of his children, he might bring about a revolutionary transformation in his attitude towards woman. He will have an unclouded vision of life and the fellowship of woman and man will be considered sacred.

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