

January, 1956

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# VALUES



**Wisdom and Women**



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VALUES is devoted to integrating human understanding unitively, impartially and globally in the interests of the general good.

Published monthly for the Gurukula Publishing House, Kaggalipura P. O., Bangalore District (South), India, and Edited by John Spiers. Printed by Kalyan Printers Ltd., 12, Jayachamaraja Road, Bangalore 2. Yearly Subscription: India, Pakistan and Ceylon Rs. 6; the rest of Asia and Africa Rs. 9; Europe and Australia 18 sh.; America \$3.00



# Editorial

TO BE WISE is to recognize that all values have their source in the selfhood of man or woman considered non-distinctively; and to be spiritual is to see the highest of values and prefer it to lower ones. Out of slime and dirt come forth all the glorious flowers and foods. The roadside puddle can reflect the supernal rainbow glory of the dawn or moonlight and stars.

So also here. Our daily existence can reflect interior glories. Out of the sexual or physiological differences here, values of grandeur concerning womanhood or manliness can also arise, and from our common life male and female can be transcended in our single humanity.

Except in the disparity of physiology there is no special wisdom for woman or for man. But this is not the judgment of society where relative values are upheld and defended. Most common judgments of this kind are banalities sunk in necessity.

The most common examples of such necessity-born values are the social and sexual stereotypes wherein the sexes are given absolute fixed roles, to break which is considered "abnormal." Nature lays down sexual roles only. Society adds to these. In current dominant societies man is the breadwinner or provider-husband and woman is the housekeeper. Occupations are rigidly typed. Only when the ultimate necessity of war comes along are these "eternal" roles abandoned and then the whole case for man-woman divisions in the social and intellectual field breaks down.

**Male-based prejudices:** In the search for wisdom the tendency is always to follow the ways of society and necessity and sex-based fashions. Woman's freedom here has obviously been restricted by male-conditioned prejudices. But wisdom has surmounted these obstacles. A Joan of Arc retains her glory as a woman and yet defies the whole masculine set-up. She exposes the weakness of the French King and by a tragic death reveals the greedy foundation of the age of chivalry in which the English are the horrid example. Male-dominated religions such as Christianity have not yet gone beyond the position which Hypatia had to suffer, nor has Islam gone

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VALUES' TOPIC NEXT MONTH IS PSYCHOLOGY.



beyond the male antagonisms wherein women are compelled to play a "yes-man" role in matters of wisdom, as witnessed by Quratul Ayn and the persistence of ugly systems like purdah.

Vedic-based religion is no better. The much-boasted Rama-raj which Gandhi openly stood for placed a very low value on women, subordinating her *in perpetua* to a role of sex and wife. Rama's social ethics condemned an innocent Sita who had to seek shelter in the forest Gurukula of the sage Valmiki, a clear case where the absolutist Guru alone understood what wisdom and justice meant, (as told in the *Uttara Ramayana*). Women at all times in the major religions have sought shelter from harsh societies in religious institutions, convents and viharas, nunneries and ashramas.

One of our Indian contributors (Mrs. Kamala Bai) this month has called attention to this harshness of male dominated societies. Viewing the situation we must admit that a revision of the whole situation is needed, a revaluation of wisdom which will give equal status to woman (not as a sexual inferior) in terms of humanity as such. The absolutist Gurus have taken this view but society as it is has always ignored their unitive outlook. In *Emile* Rousseau says "But for her sex, a woman is a man." So it is sex that a woman has to transcend. Hundreds of women in the oppressive Victorian age did so, some as notorious and some as famous "freed" human beings. Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Annie Besant and Mrs. Baker Eddy are recent cases of women who were world figures in the religious field. They had all to smash many orthodox conventions, and were in many ways superior to millions of submissive males with relativist notions, let alone the conditioned women who have in a panic also supported the men.

**Vision of the Guru:** But true Gurus have looked with kindly eyes on all, including that most despised class of women, the prostitutes. They have as Burns would say, "waived the quantum of the sin" and looked at them as plain essentially good human beings. People condemn most harshly what they secretly envy. Hence they are most violently condemnatory of the Pariahs of society for which, as Marx rightly pointed out in the *Communist Manifesto* bourgeois society is itself responsible. Women are treated, not as human beings but as the property of men; and under such circumstances many married women are further away from wisdom



than their scorned sisters on the streets who are honest about this property-status. But social taboos and preferences have no place in the light of wisdom, and the intention to follow wisdom's path, being a vertical relationship with truth or the Guru, leaves aside any relevance to status socially, or to what may have happened in the past. Such a person, man or woman equally, though they be the greatest "sinners" according to society, are at one stroke delivered, and free to partake of equality in status with the most pure. Indeed, their greater understanding and broader knowledge of the undercover facts of social life, may enable such women to achieve full fledged Guruhood, liberation or nirvana, more easily.

**Hypostatic Values:** The spiritual status and the wisdom-values attached to womanhood make an interesting study which readers can follow up. While man may not have treated the women around him with wisdom, he has compensated for this by the deification of feminine virtues. These hypostatic counterparts are universal. They are graded from the lowest to the highest. Low in the scale are the Furies, the daughters of night; Hecate, the blood-soaked witch; those bird-women, the Harpies, and the three Fates who pursued mortals relentlessly. The same Greeks had the Gorgon, the snake-haired Medusa and the punishing Nemesis. Corresponding to those we have in India, the Rakshasis or female demons, and Bhadra Kali who drips with blood and wears a necklace of torn limbs and skulls.

Rising in the scale of values, we have the three Graces and the nine Muses (the latter representing history, lyric poetry, comedy, tragedy, choral dance, erotic poetry, epic poetry, astronomy, and last but not least Polyhymnia, the Muse of the Sublime Hymn, the vehicle of pure wisdom writing). In India each of these has its counterpart also (apsaras, siddhis, gandharvis, raginis etc.).

Then we have the higher aspects of womanhood; in India there is Lakshmi typifying all the richness of well being, rising like Aphrodite out of the sea, standing on a lotus, like Aphrodite on a nautilus shell. She is Persephone, covered with spring's fragrance and embellished with jewels and flowers and everything that stands for the glamour of womanhood. This is the ultimate value arising from the primordial conception of the Earth-Mother (Demeter or Geo-Mater), originally as with simple human societies, the vast pregnant



earth-figure; or she is Diana of the Ephesians with her innumerable breasts who suckles the entire creation. She is raised on high to become transformed into the wifely consort of the highest gods, as Juno of Zeus or the Shakti or Shiva.

**Wisdom is Feminine :** Beyond these even we have the feminine value at its highest, as pure wisdom. It is justification enough, surely, for the rank given to women : that wisdom is never imagined or idealized as a male, but always as a woman. Whether King Solomon or an Indian sage sings in praise of Wisdom, the reference is always to the feminine. It is SHE who is WISDOM, never he. Thus we have the Aphrodite of the Heavens of Plato, and the tremendous figure of Athene, born directly from the brow of Zeus, full-fledged, springing out complete at once, as wisdom always does. This is Woman in the Highest. And in India we have Saraswati, embodiment of Beauty, Music, and Knowledge, whose magical display is the entire universe which includes man himself.

In many of the dialogues of Christian mystics, the male disciple converses with this feminine figure of Wisdom. Socrates sat at the feet of a woman Guru who is called Diotima. In modern times Avatar Meher Baba was first brought to a realization of wisdom by meeting a mysterious wise woman at Poona named Hazrat Babajan. Her tomb in the heart of Poona is a centre of holy pilgrimage to both Muslims and Hindus alike.

Even in the orthodox context of modern Catholic theology, it is Mary as the Queen of Heaven who is finally appealed to, and in the Far East, it is to her counterpart Kwan-yin that Buddhist devotees look. And to come from these sublime heights right down to the pages of newspapers read by all, we have patriotic female divinities like Mother India, Britannia, La France and so on, and figures such as the Liberty statue dominates the gateway to America, while Justice is a woman deity presiding over lawcourts throughout the world.

**Revised Spirituality :** In a revised spirituality we must begin by declaring the sameness of fitness of all aspirants for wisdom and avoid the duality that divides the human race into male and female. In India the androgynous Shiva known as *Ardha-narisha* (Lord who is half female) stands for this neutral concept in tune with the Absolute. But few men and women are ready for this detached view. Nature on either



side will subtly intervene with conflict arising. On a city bus a healthy young emancipated woman in slacks who feels the equal of any man and forthrightly says so, will expect a man twice her age to give her his seat. Similarly, many men with avowed global attitudes will resent any attempt of their womenfolk to be equally generous or spontaneous and expect them to retire in the presence even of their Guru, or they will be carried away by unjust social conventions for the sake of what neighbours may think. Germans held that a woman was fit for KKK-Kinder, Kuchen, Kirche (Kids, Kitchen and Kirk-church). An aspiring woman who seeks for wisdom is going to play havoc in the home under such a role if she is positive, and if negative will resort to sickness and hysteria.

Thus wisdom as woman is regarded in Vedantic literature as *Maya*—at once delusory (in its negating aspect) and as the wonder and joy of the manifested glories of earth and heaven (in its positive aspect).

Let us then forthrightly adore that blessed aspect of woman as Wisdom Supreme, forever playing the divine harmony on her lute, revealing the Absolute through every sense, all-inclusive, in an eternal hymn of pure joy—the Self singing rapturously to the Self—where song and singer and Self are all one.

### **The Frowning Beauty**

WHEN the famous beauty, Hsi Shih of Wu was troubled in mind, she would knit her brows and frown on everything around her. An ugly woman of the neighbourhood, seeing and admiring Hsi Shih's beauty, went home and thought she would imitate the beauty. So she laid her hands on her heart, and began to stare and frown on all around her. When the rich people of the village saw her, they shut fast their doors and would not go out, and when the poor people saw her, they took their wives and children and ran away from her. The ugly woman knew how to admire the frowning beauty, but she did not know how it was that the famous beauty, though frowning, was beautiful.

—CHUANG TZU, Book XIV.



# Woman is Wisdom

By DR. P. NATARAJAN

WOMAN has a rare ability to be illogical. This troubled Socrates and it made even Shakespeare refer to "woman's reason" derogatorily. But in fact this is not her weakness as is often thought; it is rather her strength, for there are two aspects of wisdom, each of which has its particular drawback or imperfection. A woman who can contemplatively balance these two aspects into harmony rises in her personal value so much as to become ever-remembered in history. She is a Hypatia, a Joan of Arc or a Heloise. She becomes the perfect woman whom great creative artists portray, giving us merely a gasping attempt in picturing the perfect woman who lives in their imagination. Man's duty is ever to attempt to help woman to represent this harmony which will reveal in herself rare personal values such as good repute, well-being, good speech, keen memory, a determined will, firm resolve and ever-forgiving endurance as the sage Vyasa so masterfully enumerates them in the *Bhagavad Gita* (x, 34).\*

Shakespeare's Portia reveals some of these rare values. Sophie, the perfect type of girl, the counterpart of Emile the student, portrayed by Rousseau, on careful study reveals rare contemplative traits similar to what Victor Hugo elaborates in *Cosette*. The Mona Lisa of Leonardo da Vinci has the distinction of making a departure from the austere Madonna type of the Middle Ages to a type of perfect woman who has a jocund smile playing gently around her lips for the first time in the history of European art. Dante's Beatrice and Goethe's Marguerite are further examples in literature where the personal value of womanhood soars very high reaching the standard of the *Kena Upanishad* where the Gods of heaven such as Indra find in Uma the pure snow maiden of the Himalaya a final guide in the matter of recognizing the Absolute (*Brahman*). Rousseau's Sophie is even described in the very first sentence as *not* "beautiful", which the author intends to be a compliment when the true perfection of womanhood as he understands it is grasped by the reader.

It was Newton who made a subtle theological distinction

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\* Shrir vak cha narinam smritir medha dhritihi kshama



# Sophie

By J. J. ROUSSEAU

SOPHIE is not beautiful; but in her presence men forget the fairer women, and the latter are dissatisfied with themselves. At first sight she is hardly pretty; but the more we see her the prettier she is; she wins where so many lose, and what she wins she keeps. Her eyes might be finer, her mouth more beautiful, her stature more imposing; but no one could have a more graceful figure, a finer complexion, a whiter hand, a daintier foot, a sweeter look, and a more expressive countenance. She does not dazzle; she arouses interest, she delights us, we know not why.

Sophie is fond of dress, and she knows how to dress; her mother has no other maid; she has taste enough to dress herself well; but she hates rich clothes; her own are always simple but elegant. She does not like showy but becoming things. She does not know what colours are fashionable, but she makes no mistake about those that suit her. No girl seems more simply dressed, but no one could take more pains over her toilet; no article is selected at random, and yet there is no trace of artificiality. Her dress is very modest in appearance and very coquettish in reality; she does not display her charms, she conceals them, but in such a way as to enhance them. When you see her you say, "That is a good modest girl," but when you are with her, you cannot take your eyes or your thoughts off her, and one might say that this very simple adornment is only put on to be removed bit by bit by the imagination.

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when he remarked "God is not good, but goodness". Similarly, it would be philosophically more sound to describe harmonized womanhood not just as "beautiful" or even "graceful" but as Beauty or Grace itself. Each such value, when brought under the scope of contemplative thought gets an absolutist touch which may be said to be Platonic by which it gets a capital letter initially. Like ideas of Justice and Truth, Beauty and even Wisdom can gain a unique status or a Supreme Value. Psyche and Sophia thus represent Womanhood in the light of the Absolute.



# Avaiyar, a Wise Woman of South India

By DR. A. THEYAGARAJAN

*The author, with his wife who is also a doctor, practices in Madras. Here for the first time in English is the story of a great woman sage, with translations—we wish we had room for more in this issue!—of her works.*

THE name Avaiyar is a household word wherever the Tamil language is spoken. It just means “the venerable wise old woman,” and, though originally it belonged to one person, in the course of centuries it has gradually assumed a generic character, meaning any wise and venerable woman. Hence there are, historically, at least three persons bearing the name.

The first one we know about belonged to a period somewhere between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. The second and third Avaiyars have to be reckoned in the sixth to eighth century and the ninth to tenth century A.D. respectively. Very little is known of their lives. But all three came from the stock of the native population. It is known that one of them was born in a *cheri* (i.e., the locality where the people of the soil, or “pariahs” reside) as distinguished from the places where the mainly foreign-influenced population or Aryanized section, priests and Brahmins, lived. This *cheri*

## Shakuntala

*Would'st though the young year's blossoms and the fruits of  
its decline,*

*And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted,  
fed,*

*Would'st thou the Earth and Heaven itself in one sole name  
combine?*

*I name thee, O Shakuntala! and all at once is said.*

—GOETHE



was known as Nannidu-cheri, and was situated in the Tanjore district of South India. This Avaiyar was brought up in a tailor's house. Another Avaiyar played the role of a peace-maker between the Tamil kings. All of these Avaiyars wandered from village to village, teaching people, helping and consoling them. They were all single women who lived to a good old age, probably as a result of their practice of yoga. They were completely free from class and caste prejudices and other superstitions, whether religious or social. They were great mystics and lovers of wisdom and they wrote poetry which is loved equally by the simple and common folk as by the learned scholars. Collections of their teachings have come down to the present time and are very popular in the Tamil land where every child and adult studies them and draws inspiration from them as a special kind of wisdom-teaching.

A few of these sayings, chosen more or less at random, and rendered freely into English, are given here, but the reader will miss unfortunately, the beauty and sweetness of the language of the original where certain peculiar emphasis is laid by poetic devices giving a depth impossible to bring out. But this must do for a sample, to indicate, as it were the direction of the thoughts and feelings of these wisdom-writings.

First some single line aphorisms from a work called *Athishoodi* (literally "the weaver of the *athi* flower—or Shiva), the name taken from the first line of the work.

*Sweet and useful let the talk be.*

*Control rising anger.*

*Perseverence and firmness, lose not.*

*Gratitude never forget, but cherish.*

*Know the friend well before a friend become.*

*Protect and look after father and mother.*

*Avoid the craving to eat more than necessary.*

*Beyond essential requirements, build not extensive mansions.*

*For ill-health, never a chance allow.*

*Take not to the profession of fighting.*

These ordinary maxims are interspersed with thoughts such as :—

*Falter not even in the face of great evil.*

*(Get rid of ignorance.*



Desire to do good.  
 Persevere in the acquisition of wisdom.  
 Seek the company of the wise.  
 Firmly put away deluding desires.  
 Hold fast to the good.  
 From real nature and goal, separate not.  
 To get enlightened deliverance, live.  
 Become a wise person.  
 Let thy vow be to help and protect any living thing.

Then to turn to a few selections from another collection called *Konrai Vendam* (Lord with the *Konrai* flowers), i.e. *Shiva*. This is again the first line of the book.

Even over a small job, a work of no importance, ponder well and venture to do.  
 The money-grabber's accumulated wealth, the evil-doer's possession becomes.  
 Sweeter far is simple food got from your free labour on the land than all the  
     victuals got from a servant's work under a master.  
 Better than a householder's life, no other way of life there is so good.  
 Far superior is character to the Brahmin's study and ritual.  
 Higher than the mother, temple none there is.  
 The first realized god, the mother and father are.  
 Food is defined as that alone which is the fruit of your labour.  
 The words of the wise are life-giving nectar.  
 The path of wisdom is not for those who study not life, nor analyse nor  
     concentrate.  
 Neutral silence is the limit of knowledge.

Then from *Moothurai* or Ancient Sayings, we learn :—

Like what is inscribed on hard stone is what is done to a good person  
     remembered.  
 Poverty in youth is painful indeed ; but pleasurable things in old age are even  
     more painful.  
 Good it really is, with a good person to be in contact.  
 Good it really is, the profitable words of the good to listen to.  
 Good indeed it is, to be advised by the wise.  
 Good indeed it is, to be associated with the wise !  
 Like the fast-driven arrow's impression on fast-flowing water ( in its transience )  
     is the anger of the wise.  
 Even unto death, when evil and evil alone is done to the wise, from the  
     wise the evil-doers receive nothing but good and all help ;  
 The lofty green tree, nothing but cool shade affords to the cruel cutter, till  
     felled down at last it is.



Finally, the following are from *Nalvazhi*, The Good Path:—

*If one is to describe caste and classify humans at all, then two and two alone are the castes, and no other.*

*They who are just and good and charitable, rendering all possible help to people, to the superior caste belong.*

*The selfish, uncharitable human beings to the inferior caste belong—according to the wisdom-teaching.*

*Year after year, weeping and mourning will not bring the beloved dead ones back again to life.*

*Oh you people of the world! Grieve no more!*

*The same way as the dead ones, we too will go.*

*Nothing in this world belongs to us really.*

*And till death doth claim us, therefore, let us freely give to the needy, leading a simple life, with the feeling and the knowledge that nothing really belongs to us.*

*Differentiating, this is good for me and that is bad;*

*Distinguishing between “I” and “mine” and “he” and “his,”*

*Differentiating this is to be done and that is not to be done,*

*Live not thus.*

*Difference none there exists.*

*What you are, that it is :*

*And that is truth.*

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## Grinding

Dispassion's mill, with earnest mind,

Lo, here grind I,—

While for a handle faith I find

To turn it by.

A handful of past deeds I deem

Grist for the mill,

And grind in the one Soul supreme

My good or ill.

All outward form to dust is ground,

All eyes can see,

For 'tis the Lord himself, I've found,

Who grinds for me.

(*Avate*, 188. *Vairagya abhimane*) JANABAI, 14th century. She was a servant woman in the household of Namdev, one of the great devotional Gurus of the Mahrathas.



# Song of the Absolute

By LALLA OF KASHMIR

*How Lalla of Kashmir, a farmer's daughter, was driven from home by her mother-in-law, and who found a Guru called Sedboy, is a long and fascinating story. She lived in the early part of the 14th century. She danced and sang her Advaitic (non-dualistic) philosophy. Here are some of her verses.*

The illumination of the Self in the organ of thought is the true worship of Shiva.

Holy books will disappear and then only the mystic formula remain ;

When the mystic formula departed, nought but mind was left.  
When the mind disappeared, nought was left anywhere—  
And a void became merged with the Void.

He who hath deemed another and himself as the same ;  
He who hath deemed the day of joy and the night of sorrow to be alike ;

He whose mind hath become free from duality—  
He and he alone hath seen the Lord of the chiefest of gods.

When by repeated practice of yoga the whole expanse of the visible universe hath ascended to absorption ;

When the qualified universe hath become merged with ether !  
When the ethereal void itself hath become dissolved, not but the Weal hath remained —

The true doctrine, O Absolutist, is but this alone !

There is no word or (thought of) mind,  
There is no non-transcendent or transcendent,  
Not by vow of silence, not by mystic attitudes is there entry there ;

Not there dwell Shiva and his Shakti  
If there remaineth somewhat, that is what the doctrine teacheth.



# The Tragedy of Hypatia

By JOHN SPIERS

*The acknowledged head of the Platonic Academy at Alexandria, Hypatia's martyrdom at the hands of a monk-led rabble, marks the first great blot of dogmatic intolerance in the records of orthodox Christianity.*

MILLIONS of people have seen one or all of the many spectacular films depicting life in Roman times, and there have been quite a number and probably more to come showing the courage of Christian martyrs under the tyranny of the Roman emperors. But it is hardly likely that more than one cinema-goer in a hundred thousand has heard of Hypatia. A hush-hush curtain spreads over her name, and yet compared with many a saint of the Church, Hypatia was a far more important individual, being the recognized Head of the Greek philosophic world.

The Christians murdered Hypatia — savagely — in a Church! Such a scandalous, unheard-of deed is unlikely to be the central theme of any of these cinemascopic entertainments. People can stand seeing Christians being nobly slaughtered by pagans. It goes to prove the intolerance of the opposition. Non-Christians are expected to be brutal. But when a proved intolerance is equally manifested on the part of Christians themselves, 'as soon as they stepped into imperial power in the person of the Spaniard, the Emperor Theodosius in the year 379, there is silence.

**Her eminence:** Hypatia lived during the reign of Theodosius and his sons (who divided the Empire at Rome and Byzantium between them). Hypatia was born at Alexandria, a city which for hundreds of years had been famed as the great meeting-place of the whole world, where Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Persian and Indian met in commerce and above all in religion and philosophy. Until the dictatorship of the Christian emperors it had always had an open character. Great teachers had achieved fame in its halls, and the noble Plotinus, some 200 years earlier, had found his Guru at Alexandria in the person of Ammonius the



Sack-Bearer (probably an Indian), as had also Origen who was a Christian, and between these pupils, one pagan and one a follower of Jesus, there was no quarrel. The memories of the great Library (burnt accidentally when Julius Caesar was there) lingered on in what was left of it, and in the later additions of three centuries. The official language was Greek and great scholars whose names are still in use were proud to belong to this university city of the old world. Euclid was an Alexandrian and so was Eratosthenes who correctly measured the globe, and there was Apollonius who wrote on conic sections. Hipparchus charted the stars and here also Hero devised a steam engine.

To rise to academical eminence in such a centre as Alexandria was therefore difficult, and yet Hypatia, a Greek woman, daughter of Theon, a mathematician, filled the highest seat of honour. To thousands of pupils who flocked to hear her lectures she was the incarnation of wisdom, a veritable Athena, a true disciple of Plato and Plotinus. She seems to have been an only child, and she assisted her father in his learned commentaries, as well as writing commentaries herself on learned subjects like astronomy and mathematics.

Hypatia was noted for four things: her modesty, her beauty, her eloquence and her devotion to philosophy. All her contemporaries of whom there is record bear witness to these four qualities. Many sincere Christians who strove to know something of philosophy, attended her lectures, and among them was a student called Synesius, who afterwards became the Bishop of Ptolemais. His letters to her which are extant, are full of reverence and praise. He asks her about the construction of an instrument for ascertaining the positions of the planets and stars, called an astrolabe. She was also on friendly terms with the highest officer of the land, the Prefect of Alexandria, a "pagan" named Orestes.

**Why she was murdered:** But her advent was at an ill time. Only one hundred years before, the Christians were being persecuted most atrociously by Diocletian, the Roman emperor. Now, although the tables were turned, and a Christian emperor ruled at Constantinople, the memory of those years still persisted, smouldering like an underground fire. And it was Hypatia's misfortune to be the innocent victim of an occasion for that fire of hate to burst out.

In the year 412 Cyril was made Bishop of Alexandria and there began a kind of minor inquisition, for Cyril wanted



power for the church and he was, at the same time, representative of that zealous bigotry which marks many Western theologians. Cyril was the main supporter of the credal dogma that the Virgin Mary was *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, and managed to get twelve anathemas on the subject accepted at the general church Council of Ephesus in 431. Already there had been rumblings of the hatred-response of the Christians. The great statue of Serapis or Osiris had been destroyed by the Christians. The Egyptian Trinity Osiris-Isis-Horus was clearly a rival to the new revalued Christian Trinity, and it had to go.

How irritating for Cyril then, to be Bishop of a stronghold of the new religion, and to have even his own best intelligences stolen by a beautiful pagan woman. No compromise was possible for a man of his type. The danger must be stopped.

It was easy. In March, 415, led by one Peter the Reader, a mob of monks from one of the many monasteries, abducted Hypatia when she was returning from one of her lectures. They stirred up the Christian crowd and carried Hypatia to a church—yes, a church! There they stripped her, flayed her with oyster-shells and burnt her poor body piecemeal . . .

Thus they thought to kill philosophy by savaging an innocent woman. So did the torturers of Spain and the witch-burners of Scotland and Massachusetts even a few hundred years ago. They all thought that by hurting and liquidating humans they could stifle supposedly rival views. But one Hypatia for her *philosophy* is worth a thousand emperors and plaster saints. There is no outward monument to this last of the classical Greek philosophers, but in the hall of the Absolute she lives eternally, a lovely light bright in the midst of a light of loveliness.

### Mona Lisa

SHE is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary: and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands.

WALTER PATER (in *The Renaissance* describing Leonardo da Vinci's famous picture.)



# Spirituality and Indian Womanhood

By SRIMATI K. KAMALA BAI

*The author and her husband are both disciples of Dr. P. Natarajan, and both work in offices at Ernakulam, on the west coast of India.*

FROM INDIA, the land of feminine divinities like Saraswati, Lakshmi, Kali, and of divine heroines like Sita, Savitri, Maitreyi and Avvaiyar, it is a privilege to write of the wisdom of women. It seems as if no other part of the world has honoured women as India has done. Almost everything worthy and precious—earth, wealth, learning and nature as a whole, are all personified as women. It is Mother Earth we speak of, and when we mean riches we say Lakshmi. Kali is the feminine aspect of the spiritual. She is power or *shakti*, the better half of Shiva, Lord of the Universe. She is worshipped in various aspects according to the attitude of the worshipper. In her fierce aspect she is Rudri, bearing a blood-stained sword and garlanded with skulls, roaring and frightening the whole world with her every step. Yet the same deity in her gracious aspect is depicted as the kind Mother of the Universe, embodiment of all sweetness, tenderness, purity and divinity. These latter attributes implies the Indian concept of womanhood. She is *Devi*—goddess—to her husband, son and everyone else.

At the southernmost tip of India she is worshipped in her virginal aspect. The Cape is named after her, Cape Comorin, *Kanya Kumari*, the Virgin Goddess who has sublimated her love for the Lord Shiva who is seated in the northernmost Himalaya, on holy Mount Kailas. From this most southernly end of India she sends her sidelong glances of love to the northernmost Himalaya, uniting the whole Indian world in love.

**Women despised :** Nothing supernatural is attributed to the women of the Indian epics when they are esteemed as *Devis* or goddesses. Sita, Savitri, Daupadi and Kunti are all addressed as *Devi* (female divinity), even by their husbands. And there are the classical women of the past—Maitreyi, Mirabai and Avvaiyar, all of philosophic temperament.



In spite of this however, it remains a fact that philosophers despise women. In almost every work of philosophy there is a chapter set apart to decry women. That is a warning to men who are inclined to the spiritual life. They must shun women as something dangerous. However, it is curious that these authors did not consider the question *vice versa*, i.e. whether man might not himself be a stumbling-block in the spiritual progress of woman! Manu says women do not deserve freedom. Shankara indirectly despises women when he says it is a rare privilege to be born as a human being and a still rarer blessing that one is born a man! Ramakrishna of our own times too is of the same opinion when he says that women and wealth are to be abhorred.

It is true that by nature woman is not as free as man. Spirituality however implies an absolutist way of life and woman as a rule follows the relativist pattern of life. By nature she is the mother. The burden of rearing children is on her. She is forced to confine herself to the home and necessities, unlike man, who is free of all these troubles.

But this does not necessarily mean that she cannot soar high in the sphere of wisdom and spirituality. Maitreyi of the Upanishads became the spouse of Yajnavalkya who was already a married man. That looks shabby in conduct in the traditional ethical sense of India. But Maitreyi could sublimate her sex to the heights of pure love where her husband was to her a Guru or preceptor. In fact, the idea of man and wife in India implies something towards a spiritual end. The wife is known as *Sahadharma charini* (helpmate in the fulfilment of righteousness)—she is part and parcel of the husband in fulfilling his duties here and hereafter. She submits or offers everything at his feet and feels one with him. So there is no question of relativism. She is realising an absolutist position by becoming a wife and that is why she is called a *devi* or divinity.

**Savitri the Absolutist:** In Indian mythology there is a wonderful story of Savitri who defeated death and gained back the life of her dead husband. It is symbolical. Death represents the relative aspect of life. But to surpass death means to outlive the limits of time. That is the absolutist point of view. The wise men of ancient India prayed: *Mrityor ma amritam gamaya* "Let me pass from mortality to immortality." To Indians this is not just wishful thinking, but is something that can be realized. The fact is that



according to the absolutist standpoint there neither time nor clime. There is negation of past and future, leaving only the "eternal present." Savitri's love to her husband in the ordinary sense ceases to exist with death. But when it is sublimated in the sense that "God is Love," it lives forever. And that is how she regains her "dead" husband, and that is how an Indian woman is an absolutist. She can be a wife, a mother, a house-keeper and at the same time spiritual in the highest sense of the term.

She does not believe in going to the forest in search of spiritual realization. She can be in the kitchen preparing food for her husband and children, looking after their needs, serving them wholeheartedly and selflessly, loving her home and her neighbours and everyone she comes across, viewing everything in the light of motherly love. It is her *tapas* (spiritual discipline, askesis) and spiritually she can soar as high as anyone. She does not shun the good and beautiful things in nature. She welcomes them as the flowers of springtime which are gifts of Mother Nature. She esteems human values, considering wisdom and spirituality as the highest of all. She understands that all values are to be considered in the same vertical line with spirituality and wisdom. So instead of taking philosophy to the austere life of a yogi in his cave, women can bring philosophy down to earth, to the daily life of mankind, enabling human beings to live out the full span of life, correct and sublime at every step.

### In Vedic Times

GIRLS could become *brahmacharinis* (students dedicated to the Absolute) as boys became *brahmacharis*. In institutions called Gurukulas boys and girls were educated together. In the *ashram* (wisdom retreat) of Valmiki (reputed author of the epic *Ramayana*) Atreyi (daughter of a great sage of ancient India) studied with Kusha and Lava, Rama's children. In the *Atharva Veda* it is prescribed that a maiden was only entitled to marry after completing her *brahmacharini's* course. According to Panini (noted sage and grammarian) girls were admitted to Vedic schools called *charanas*. A female student was called a *kathi*, and there were hostels for girls called *chhatra-sala*.

PADMINI SENGUPTA

*Everyday Life in Ancient India.*



# A Heroine of Iran

SOME of our readers may be aware of the renewed persecution of the followers of Baha Ullah in Iran. The orthodoxy of that country who belong to the Shiah sect, have always been opposed to any open form of religion, on political as well as theological grounds. When the Sufi, Mirza Ali Mohammed, known as the Bab (or Gate), the forerunner of Baha Ullah, a man of the most pure life and a sweet spiritual character, began to attract many followers in what was then Persia, the Shah and his government had him imprisoned and shot, while his followers were arrested and persecuted. The Bab was killed when he was thirty, at Tabriz, in 1850. Among his followers was Quratul Ayn, the daughter of a Mohammedan priest, a worthy member of the glorious band of Sufi singers of the Absolute. She knew she would meet the same fate as the Bab and in 1852 she too became a martyr to her faith. Abdul Baha, who succeeded Baha Ullah as spiritual director of the Bahais, wrote of her as follows :

At the time of the appearance of the Bab she showed such tremendous courage and power that all who heard her were astonished. She threw aside her veil despite the immemorial custom of the women of Iran and, although it was considered impolite to speak with men, this heroic woman carried on controversies with the most learned men, and in every meeting she vanquished them. The Iranian Government took her prisoner ; she was stoned in the streets, anathematized, exiled from town to town, threatened with death, but she never failed in her determination to work for the freedom of her sisters. She bore persecution and suffering with the greatest heroism ; even in prison she gained converts. To a Minister of Iran, in whose house she was imprisoned, she said : " You can kill me as soon as you like but you cannot stop the emancipation of women." At last the end of her tragic life came ; she was carried into a garden and strangled. She put on, however, her choicest robes as if she were going to join a bridal party.

The poem given here was translated by the famous scholar Edward G. Browne :

## Surrender

*THE thralls of yearning love constrain in the bonds of pain and calamity  
These broken hearted lovers of thine to yield their lives in their zeal for thee.  
Though with sword in hand my Darling stand with intent to slay, though I  
sinless be,*



*If it pleases him, this tyrant's whim, I am well content with his tyranny.  
 As in sleep I lay at the break of day that cruel charmer came to me,  
 And in the grace of his form and face the dawn of the morn I seemed to see.  
 The musk of Cathay might perfume gain from the scent those fragrant tresses rain,  
 While his eyes demolish a faith in vain attacked by the pagans of Tartary.  
 With you, who condemn both love and wine for the hermit's cell and the zealot's  
 shrine,  
 What can I do, for our Faith divine you hold as a thing of infamy?  
 The tangled curls of thy darling's hair, and thy saddle and steed are thy only care;  
 In thy heart the Absolute hath no share, nor the thought of the poor man's  
 poverty.  
 Sikander's pomp and display be thine, the Qalandar's\* habit and way be mine;  
 That, if it please thee, I resign, while this, though bad, is enough for me.  
 Pass from the station of "I" and "We," and choose for thy home Nonentity,  
 For when thou hast done the like of this, thou shalt reach the supreme Felicity.*

\* One who renounces to follow the Sufi path.

QURATUL AYN.

## EROS AND APHRODITE

By PLOTINUS

EROS or Love, inciter of human souls towards the supernal Beauty, is sometimes described as the child of Aphrodite. Now to us Aphrodite is twofold; there is the heavenly Aphrodite and there is the Aphrodite who presides over earthly unions; the higher was not born of a mother and has no part in marriages, for in Heaven there is no marrying.

The heavenly Aphrodite, daughter of pure Intelligence, must be the Soul at its divinest, unmingled as the immediate emanation of the Unmingled; remaining ever above, as neither desirous nor capable of descending to this sphere, a divine Being, having no part in matter. Any nature springing directly from pure Intelligence must itself be pure. Soul then, could never fall from its sphere; it is closer held to Divine Mind than the very sun can hold the light which radiates from it, held firmly to it still.

But besides this purest Soul, unmingled, absolute, there must also be the secondary Soul, the Aphrodite of this universe. At once there is another Love, the eye with which this second soul looks upward. This is the love presiding over marriage; but it, too, has its touch of upward desire, and in the degree of that striving, stirs and leads upwards the souls of the young and every soul with which it is united in so far as there is a natural tendency to remembrance of the divine. For every soul is striving towards the Good, even the soul that is mingled (with matter) and that of particular beings; for each follows upon the Soul divine and is its offspring.



## 5. Why we love

By YAJNAVALKYA

*From the oldest of the Upanishads, the Brihad-Aranyaka (Mystical Instruction of the Great Forest), this is one of the earliest recorded wisdom dialogues. Maitreyi and Katyayani bear a close resemblance to Mary and Martha of the New Testament.*

NOW THEN, Yajnavalkhya had two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani. Of these two, Maitreyi was of a philosophic nature, but Katyayani had just an ordinary woman's knowledge of things. Yajnavalkhya was about to begin another mode of life, freed from household affairs.

YAJNAVALKYA: Maitreyi! Listen, I am serious about leaving this position of a householder. So now, look here, Let me make a final settlement for you and that Katyayani.

MAITREYI: Sir! If this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I now thereby be immortal?

Y.: No, no! As the life of the rich, even so would your life be. There is no hope of immortality through wealth at all.

M.: And what am I going to do with wealth through which I shall not be immortal? Do explain to me, Sir, what you know about this matter.

Y.: Though truly, my dear, you were very dear to us, by what you have just said you have increased your dearness. Behold then, lady, I will explain it to you. But, while I am telling you, consider closely what I have to say.

Truly, it is not because of love for the husband that the husband is dear, but for love of the Self, the *Atman*; and a wife is dear too not for love of the wife but for love of the Self. It is for the Self that sons, wealth, cattle and all possessions are dear. It is because of the Self that Brahminhood and Kshatriyahood (ideal ranks of purity and chivalry) are precious. The various worlds are loved because of the Self. The gods are dear because of the Self. So also with



the *Vedas* (scripture and learning). Beings, existences, are also dear because the Self is dear. It is not because of things that things are dear, but because of the love of the Self. And so, truly, it is the Self, the *Atman*, that should be seen, that should be hearkened to, that should be considered, that should be contemplated, O Maitreyi! By this contemplation, properly understood, everything in the whole world is understood.

The ideal of Brahminhood, of purity, cannot be there in a person who sees it anywhere other than in the Self. So also with the ideal of Kshatriyahood (chivalry). The various worlds, the gods too, and all sacred learning, and all existences, everything indeed disappears or runs away from those who think their value is anywhere than in the Self.

And here are some examples: You cannot catch the sound of a drum. It is a mere effect. You have to catch the drum or the drummer, the origin, the cause. So too with a conch-shell blown, or a lute being played. And just as huge clouds of smoke rise from a fire laid with damp fuel, so too from this great Existence have come the *Vedas* (scriptures), all the learning, the legends, sciences, mystical teachings, verses, aphorisms, explanations, commentaries, rituals, food and drink, this world and all the other worlds, and all beings. The Self is the uniting place of all, just as the sea is for all waters, the tongue for all tastes, the nose for all odours, the eye for all forms seen, the ear for all sounds, the mind for all intentions, the heart for all knowledge, the hands for all actions, the sex organs for all copulative pleasure, the anus for all evacuations, the feet for all journeyings, and speech for all sacred books. If you consider a mass of salt without inside or outside which is just a mass of taste, even so is this Self, without inside or outside, just entirely a mass of knowledge.

So, arising out of these elements, into them also each separate personality vanishes away. After death there are no conscious designations (*samjna*). This is what I have to tell you, O Maitreyi.

M. : In all this indeed, Sir, I am totally bewildered. I do not understand this Self, this *Atman*. You say "After death there is no consciousness of names and separateness."

Y. : Verily, I am not saying what is bewildering. Truly, this Self is unchanging, indestructible. It is non-dual. It is unitive. It is where there is duality that you seem to



see, as it were, another, where the idea of separation comes in. Then you seem to smell or hear or think about or touch or understand something else, some other. But where everything has become just one's own Self what is it that you are going to see and how? What is there to smell, taste, speak to, listen to, think about, touch or understand? How are you going to "understand" that by which you understand this All? That Self is not this, it is not this! (*neti, neti*). It is not this or that! It is not to be taken hold of, it cannot be destroyed, it never attaches itself, it is never bound, it never trembles, it is never injured. Oh, with what are you going to understand the Understander? So, Maitreyi, I have told you what you wanted to know about immortality.

—*Brihad-Aryanyaka Upanishad*, IV, v, 1-15

## To Mary-Saraswati



O VIRGIN, fair as the moon, delight of the heavens, upon whose countenance angels and blessed gaze, grant that we thy children may grow more and more unto thy likeness and that our souls nay receive a ray of thy beauty that will not dim with the years but shine forth for all eternity.

O Mary/Saraswati, sun of heaven, re-awaken life wherever there is darkness. Mirror thyself in the faces of thy children, and grant to all of us reflection of thy light and thy ardour.

O Mary/Saraswati, strong as an army, grant victory to our ranks. We are so weak and our enemy is ferocious in his pride. Yet under thy standard we feel confident of victory over him; he knows full well the power of your heel, he trembles before the majesty of your glance. Save us, O Mary/Saraswati! fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array, and inspired not by hate but by the flames of love. AMEN/AUM.

[We have added the words Saraswati and Aum to this prayer, which was originally uttered by the Pope at a broadcast two years ago, in order to show the identity of form of worship of the highest feminine principle.]



# Woman, the Complement of Man

By J. J. ROUSSEAU

*Among the philosophers of Europe, Rousseau (1712-78) is perhaps the least understood. Here are some of his observations on the nature of woman, from Book V of his great opus on education, Emile.*

BUT for her sex, a woman is a man; she has the same organs, the same needs, the same faculties.

Yet where sex is concerned man and woman are unlike; each is the complement of the other; the difference in comparing them lies in our inability to decide, in either case, what is a matter of sex and what is not. General differences present themselves to the comparative anatomist and even to the superficial observer; they seem not to be a matter of sex; yet they are really sex differences, though the connection eludes our observation. How far such differences may extend we cannot tell; all we know for certain is that where man and woman are alike we have to do with the characteristics of the species; where they are unlike, we have to do with the characteristics of sex. Considered from these two standpoints, we find so many instances of likeness and unlikeness that it is perhaps one of the greatest of marvels how nature has contrived to make two beings so like and yet so different.

**Always a female :** The consequences of sex are wholly unlike for man and woman. The male is only a male now and again, the female is always a female, or at least all her youth; everything reminds her of her sex; the performance of her functions requires a special constitution. She needs care during pregnancy and freedom from work when her child is born; she must have a quiet, easy life while she nurses her children; their education calls for patience and gentleness, for a zeal and love which nothing can dismay; she forms a bond between father and child, she alone can win the father's love for his children and convince him that they are indeed his own. What loving care is required to preserve a united family! And there should be no question of virtue in all this, it must be a labour of love, without which the human



race would be doomed to extinction.

The mutual duties of the two sexes are not, and cannot be, equally binding on both. Women do wrong to complain of the inequality of man-made laws; this inequality is not of man's making, or at any rate it is not the result of mere prejudice, but of reason. She to whom nature has entrusted the care of the children must hold herself responsible for them to their father. No doubt every breach of faith is wrong, and every faithless husband, who robs his wife of the sole reward of the stern duties of her sex, is cruel and unjust; but the faithless wife is worse; she destroys the family and breaks the bonds of nature; when she gives her husband children who are not his own, she is false both to him and them, her crime is not infidelity but treason. To my mind it is the source of dissension and of crime of every kind. Can any position be more wretched than that of the unhappy father who, when he clasps his child to his breast, is haunted by the suspicion that this is the child of another, the badge of his own dishonour, a thief who is robbing his own children of their inheritance? Under such circumstances the family is little more than a group of secret enemies, armed against each other by a guilty woman, who compels them to pretend to love one another.

**Reputation :** Thus it is not enough that a wife should be faithful; her husband, along with his friends and neighbours, must believe in her fidelity; she must be modest, devoted, retiring; she should have the witness not only of a good conscience, but of a good reputation. In a word, if a father must love his children, he must be able to respect their mother. For these reasons it is not enough that the woman should be chaste, she must preserve her reputation and her good name. From these principles there arises not only a moral difference between the sexes, but also a fresh motive for duty and propriety, which prescribes to women in particular the most scrupulous attention to their conduct, their manners, their behaviour. Vague assertions as to the equality of the sexes and the similarity of their duties are only empty words; they are no answer to my argument.

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To cultivate the masculine virtues in women and to neglect their own is evidently to do them an injury. Women are too clear-sighted to be thus deceived; when they try to usurp



our privilege they do not abandon their own; with this result: they are unable to make use of two incompatible things, so they fall below their own level as women, instead of rising to the level of men. If you are a sensible mother you will take my advice. Do not try to make your daughter a good man in defiance of nature. Make her a good woman, and be sure it will be better for both her and us.

Does this mean that she must be brought up in ignorance and kept to housework only?... Will man make an automaton of her? No indeed, that is not the teaching of nature, who has given women such a pleasant easy wit. On the contrary, nature means them to think, to will, to love, to cultivate their minds as well as their persons; she puts these weapons into their hands to make up for their lack of strength and to enable them to direct the strength of men.

**Virtue not enough:** When I consider the special purpose of woman, when I observe her inclinations or reckon up her duties, everything combines to indicate the mode of education she requires. Men and women are made for each other, but their mutual dependence differs in degree; man is dependent on woman through his desires; woman is dependent on man through her desires and also through her needs; he could do without her better than she can do without him. She cannot fulfil her purpose in life without his aid, without his goodwill, without his respect; she is dependent on our feelings, on the price we put upon her virtue, and the opinion we have of her charms and her deserts. Nature herself has decreed that woman, both for herself and her children should be at the mercy of man's judgment.

Worth alone will not suffice, a woman must be thought worthy; nor beauty, she must be admired; nor virtue, she must be respected. A woman's honour does not depend on her conduct alone, but on her reputation, and no woman who permits herself to be considered vile is really virtuous. A man has no one but himself to consider, and so long as he does right he may defy public opinion; but when a woman does right her task is only half finished, and what people think of her matters as much as what she really is. Hence her education must, in this respect, be different from man's education. "What will people think" is the grave of a man's virtue and the throne of a woman's.

VALUES



# To My Loved One

By GARRY DAVIS

*Man must always let God shine through his eyes ; woman must always recognize and worship God shining through Man's eyes. The first is Self-Knowledge ; the second, Intuitive Wisdom. But the second is only God recognizing and worshipping Itself ; and the first is God's pure will shining through the crystal of Man's Self-Knowledge. Therefore only until Man's mind becomes as crystal, pure, lucid, final, can God see itself reflected in the eyes of Woman. And thus Man and Woman achieve Unity and become One in God. What else then is immortality ?*

What are you to me? . . . Let me tell you, oh my love.  
Know that without you, I am as a mere prophet mouthing vain truisms ;  
I am as a herald of what already is ;  
I am a tiller of weeds,  
a hermit without meaning or purpose.  
With you, I become Real,  
a Truth eternal and illuminating.  
With you, I become a man,  
for without woman, man is not man, but only a shadow  
waiting for his true form,  
a caricature waiting for his real image,  
a shell waiting to be filled and thus fulfilled.

With you I may transcend to heaven while on earth ;  
Without you I may only look up and be mocked by the height.  
With you I may reach the center of my being and thus  
achieve the peace of immortality ;  
Without you I may only look within longingly as a child  
gazes through the window of the toy shop.

Though you complete me, without you I have no reality.  
I do not exist.

Though with you, I am everything  
Without you I am less than nothing.  
Though with you I may walk and talk with the gods,  
Without you I have no legs and no tongue.

So come, understand my need to become man ;  
Understand what only a woman can understand  
And accept to fill the vacuum of my soul  
Mold the empty space within me to your heart's size.  
Then will we achieve bliss.



# INFORMATION ABOUT THE GURUKULA MOVEMENT

Inspired by the Guru Narayana (1854-1928), greatest recent exemplar of the non-dual wisdom of the Absolute, **The Narayana Gurukula** (an institutional Teacher-Disciple succession body) and its democratic counterpart, **The Yellow Fellowship**, form the Gurukula Movement which was founded in 1923 by Dr. P. Natarajan, the present Guru Head and foremost disciple of the Guru Narayana.

Under the motto "Of one God, one faith and one kind is man," this Movement is intended for all who seek in living terms the wisdom of the Absolute.

**Central Office :** The Gurukula, Varkala, Travancore, India.

**World Centre :** The Gurukula, Kaggalipura, Bangalore District, India.

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CUT OUT

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