

“The Role of Women in Society”

December 19th, 2010

OM...OM...OM...

Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Sai Ram!

Greetings to you all, including the viewers of www.saiwisdom.com! The topic for this morning’s talk is, “The Role of Women in Society”. What does Baba say about women and what does He expect from them? This is something we need to study and be reminded of often, so that we will grow into an ideal Sai family. So this talk is about what Baba says on the role of women in society.

THREE IN ONE IS “STHRI” OR WOMAN

Firstly, He defines the word ‘*sthri*’, which is the word for ‘woman’ in Sanskrit. There are three components: ‘*sa*’, ‘*tha*’ and ‘*ra*’. Together they make the word ‘*sthri*’ or ‘woman’. So, what is their significance?

‘*Sa*’ symbolises the *sathwic* nature—the pious quality that signifies the motherhood of a woman.

‘*Ra*’ symbolises the *rajasic*, emotional nature—a woman’s love, commitment and dedication.

‘*Tha*’ symbolises the *thamasic* nature—reservation, shyness, attachment and respect.

Therefore, ‘*sa*’, ‘*tha*’ and ‘*ra*’ signify *sathwic*, *rajasic* and *thamasic* qualities, the three elements within woman or ‘*sthri*’.

“STHRI” OR WOMAN IS VERY POWERFUL

Secondly, *sthri* or woman is, in fact, *devi* (the goddess)—all powerful, all energy! What is the meaning of this all-powerful nature of a woman?

Baba explains it this way: “She is so powerful that she will use the *rajasic* or emotional quality within her to correct her husband and children, and to remove all that is evil or bad around her.

In this sense, woman is *devi*, meaning *shakthi swaroopini*, the very embodiment of all energy. With her *rajasic* energy she is ready to transform all that is evil around her. This is one of the qualities of *sthri* or woman.

Woman or *sthri* is even more powerful in her compassion, so much so that no man can ever equal her! Compassion, sympathy and love are all supreme qualities that are embodied in woman or *sthri*. Therefore, a woman is not at all weak; instead she is very powerful, as explained by Bhagavan Baba.

Bhagavan warned all men to never consider a woman as cheap or low. Man should never think that a woman is just a toy or a doll in his hands, to play with as he likes. No! Man should be aware that a woman is very powerful and needs to be respected. This is the command of Bhagavan.

Swami explains further that no woman will abandon her virtues when confronted with problems. Many difficulties may come in life and a woman may face any number of challenges, obstacles and troubles, but no woman is prepared to give up her virtues. She will be courageous and face challenges uncompromisingly. Therein lies the greatness of women, according to Bhagavan.

MOTHER SITA SYMBOLISES THE IDEAL WOMAN

Swami gives an example from the *Ramayana*. In the holy scripture of *Ramayana*, Hanuman goes to Lanka in search of Mother Sita. When Hanuman finds her, he says, "Oh Mother! You are suffering here in Lanka, being held captive by that demon king, Ravana. Oh Mother! If you permit me, I will kill all the demons in Lanka and set you free. Grant me permission," prayed Hanuman.

Mother Sita, the ideal woman, responded as follows: "Hanuman, you are a great devotee! You have respect, love and concern for me, and you are highly devoted to Rama. But Hanuman, understand that all these demons who are making me suffer, have nothing against me personally. We have no scores to settle between us, nor an axe to grind! The demons are torturing me not because they have animosity towards me, but because they are obeying the command of Ravana, the demon king. So, it is not their fault; they cannot be blamed, Hanuman. Just as you obey Ramachandra, these demons obey Ravana. So, should you kill them? No! It is not proper on your part to kill. Moreover Hanuman, know that I am the consort of Sri Rama, and in being the consort of Sri Rama, can I be revengeful, vindictive or harmful? No! Hanuman, I do not want you to kill these demons for any reason."

As stated by Bhagavan, Sita said, "Look here Hanuman! I will now tell you a story."

MOTHER SITA TELLING A STORY TO HANUMAN

A hunter walking in a forest suddenly saw a tiger approaching. He was frightened and immediately climbed up the nearest tree for safety. But there was a bear on the tree! Now he was scared of the bear above and the tiger below, as either could kill him. What could he do?

The tiger said to the bear, "Oh bear! The hunter has climbed up and is resting close to you. Push him down and I will kill him and eat him."

But the bear said, "No! This man is my guest. I shall not betray him; he can stay."

After some time, when the bear was resting, the man saw an opportunity to escape. He pushed the bear off the branch, hoping that the tiger would kill the bear instead of him. But the bear caught hold of a branch while falling and hung safely above the tiger.

The tiger remarked from below: “Oh bear, when I wanted you to throw the man down, you said that he was your guest; but look what happened? He has betrayed you. Now that you are safe, push him and I will finish him off!”

Then the bear said, “Oh tiger, man may betray and he may be cunning, but I am not. I will not push him off. Just as man has his own nature, forbearance is my nature. Why should I give up my noble quality?”

This was the story narrated by Sita to Hanuman, explaining that, although demons may act in a demonic way, she will not do so.

Baba says, “Sita symbolises the ideal woman of India with her forgiveness, kindness, compassion, consideration, integrity and character. These are the qualities expected of a woman.”

MOTHER IS THE FIRST GURU

Baba further elaborates that culturally women are not ordinary. They preserve and develop traditions worldwide. It is the mother who guides her children to follow the tradition of the land. Home is the nucleus of culture in every nation, and women are at the heart of every home. So, if any nation is proud of its culture, legacy, heritage and values, it is because of its women. That is how much Swami praises women.

People often say, “I learnt from my mother” or, “It is my wife who co-operated with me throughout life.” Therefore, we say that behind every great man is an even greater woman. That is the greatness of women.

Further, Baba says that every country looks to the next generation of citizens to help maintain the culture, respect, and the sovereignty of their nation. All future citizens are taught by the women at home. It is a woman who teaches every child to grow into an ideal citizen. Women are the torch-bearers of this country. Therefore, a woman is the first preceptor, the first teacher and *guru*, transferring knowledge and words of wisdom to children in their infancy and childhood.

BABA IS FOR EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

Swami explains that unfortunately, during the middle ages, some negative practices were adopted in this nation. Therefore, certain social ills have crept into the history of this land.

So, what exactly happened? Significantly, women were barred from both reading the *Vedas* and from reciting the *Gayatri Mantra*. Now Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the reformer, states, “These are evil practices. Who said that women should not read *Vedas*? Scripture is the Mother! *Veda Mata!* *Veda* is your mother.”

All women should read the *Vedas!* The girls from Ananthapur campus can recite *Vedas* freely, with correct intonation, diction and pronunciation. They can chant *Vedas* for hours, just like the boys. Baba, the social reformer, is for the emancipation of women.

Baba explains that *Gayatri* is feminine:

“Om Bhur Bhuva Swaha

Tat Savitur Varenyam

Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi

Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat”

Gayatri is a woman herself, so why should other women not repeat her name freely? Ridiculous! Such paradoxical behavior! Therefore, Baba wants women all over the world to chant the once forbidden *Vedas* and *Gayatri*, without restriction.

IN ANCIENT TIMES WOMEN TOO HAD THE SACRED THREAD CEREMONY

Baba then speaks against male domination. No man should dominate a woman. He gave an example: There is a Hindu ritual that every boy goes through, named “*Upanayanam*” or ‘sacred thread’ ceremony. When boys are initiated into the *Gayatri Mantra*, there is a special celebration called *Upanayanam*. *Upa* means ‘extra’, while *nayanam* is ‘eye’; so it means ‘the additional eye of wisdom’. These two eyes (*Anil Kumar points to his eyes*) are worldly, but the third eye, *upanayana*, the eye of wisdom, enables us to glean from spiritual literature the wisdom which helps us have a spiritual experience here on earth.

Baba says that in ancient times, women also had the sacred thread. It was only in the ‘middle ages’, because of male domination, that this practice was discontinued. Then it was changed so that only boys could have *Upanayanam*.

So ladies also had *Upanayanam* earlier, as that was the practice back in those days. But man, out of his possessiveness and domination, changed the *Upanayanam* (original sacred thread) into a circular, sacred knot, called a *Mangala Sutra*, which is to be tied around the neck of every woman at the time of marriage. To recap, Baba is saying that women are as eligible and qualified as men for the *Upanayanam*, the sacred thread ceremony.

TWO IMPORTANT PLACES FOR WOMEN

Swami says that every woman has two important places in her life: one, the place where she lived with her parents; and two, the place where she lived with her in-laws. These are the two important centres of life for every woman. Therefore, it is her duty to maintain the prestige of both families—her parent’s family and also the family of her in-laws.

Swami also says that a woman can rise to the level of a *guru*. Yes! It is not only men that should be *gurus* and masters.

GOD IS ENERGY AND WOMAN IS MATTER

Baba says that in truth ALL are women, and that there is only one man, the hero. Who is he? God Himself! God is the hero, He is the only man; all the rest are women. What does He mean by that?

Woman here, in this context, means everything in the universe, everything that is made of matter. God, on the other hand, means energy. God is the life principle, God is consciousness, God is

awareness. Therefore, God who is consciousness, Divinity, energy and awareness is masculine, while all of us are matter, being feminine.

So it means that the physical body of both men and women is the same: namely, feminine. However the consciousness within both is masculine. So life is masculine, while matter (body) is feminine. Body is matter, life is energy. Energy is masculine, matter is feminine.

Only Baba can explain so well the combination of the feminine and masculine natures, which are beautifully blended in everyone. So who are you? To say, "I am a man" may not be completely correct. To say "I am a woman" may not always be correct either. We are both a man and a woman, what is known as 'androgynous'.

You are a man because the life in you, the consciousness and awareness within you is man. Yet you are a woman because the body, or matter, is woman.

Another point: why does a man want a woman? The woman in him attracts the woman outside. Woman wants man. Why? The man in her attracts the man outside. Therefore, this kind of attraction speaks of the combination of masculine and feminine qualities within every one of us. We are androgynous in our constitution, our makeup, and composition.

RAMA DESTROYED THE THAMASIC QUALITY IN TATAKI

Swami again speaks of the *Ramayana*: Lord Ram killed a lady demon by the name of Tataki. Rama then transformed another lady, Ahalya, by bringing her back to life. The third lady is Sita, whom He married. These are the three female characters in the *Ramayana* who are associated with Rama.

Baba beautifully explains: Rama killed the first lady, Tataki, the demon. He killed Tataki because she represented animalism or bestial tendencies, the quality of a thamasic nature. The lesson here is that one has to kill the thamasic quality in oneself in order to be free from dullness and inertia.

RAMA TRANSFORMED THE RAJASIC QUALITY IN AHALYA

Rama saved Ahalya, the second lady, who unfortunately fell into indiscipline and was therefore cursed by her husband (who was a saint by the name Gautama) to take the form of a stone. Out of compassion, the husband said, "Because of your indiscipline and disobedience, you will remain like that. But there will come a day when Lord Rama will pass through this forest and He will step on you. The very touch of His feet will transform you back into your original self."

GOD'S NAME CAN TRANSFORM A STONE-LIKE HEART INTO A DELICATE ONE

Baba explains the inner significance of this story. In this age of science and technology, a woman is cursed to be like a stone. The stone represents indifference, impertinence and being untouched by the suffering of fellow beings. Most of us are lying like a stone, indifferent, impertinent and untouched by the sufferings of the people in our own neighborhood.

By the touch of Rama, the stone will transform into the original form of Ahalya. What does that imply?

By repeating God's name and by meditation, our heart, which is hard like a stone, will be transformed into the soft butter-like heart of a woman. A woman's heart is so tender, delicate, sensitive and responsive. Women cannot bear any suffering.

If a woman sees a man suffering in the street, she will start crying. If you tell her anything that is sad, she begins to cry because women immediately respond. 'Woman' means 'responsive', while 'stone' means 'indifferent'. By repeating God's name, an indifferent mind becomes a responsive mind, a prayerful mind, and a sensitive mind. That is the meaning of Ahalya, whose name represents the *rajasic* quality.

Tataki, the *thamasic* quality, is killed, while *Ahalya*, the *rajasic* quality, is transformed and changed for the good by Rama.

RAMA ACCEPTED SATWIC QUALITY – SITA

The third lady is Sita, who represents the *sathwic* quality of piousness, saintliness, steadiness, balanced nature, steadfastness, patience and forbearance. Sita had all these *sathwic* qualities, and therefore Rama accepted her as His consort.

Thus, the *sathwa guna* is accepted by God, the *rajo guna* is transformed by God, and the *thamo guna* is destroyed by God. What a wonderful explanation it is, given by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

CHARACTER IS THE REAL BEAUTY OF A WOMAN

What is meant by the phrase 'woman is beautiful'? What is the real beauty of a woman? Bhagavan says, "Her character!" Character is the real beauty of a woman.

Chastity and loyalty together are the very breath of a woman. A delicate, reserved and shy nature is the essence of a woman.

Her adherence to Truth is her daily duty, her obligation. A woman's heart has a great depth of love for God, a healthy fear of sin, and strong support of morality in society.

Dhaiva Preeti - Love for God

Papa Beeti - Fear of sin

Sangha Neeti - Morality in society

These are the qualities growing in the heart of every woman.

Baba says that whatever a woman says, it will be moral and highly righteous. Her words will be helpful for a sojourn on this earth and thereafter. It is women who direct everyone to tread a path of Truth and righteousness. She is ready to die to maintain her character. She will not compromise her nobility; that is the greatness of every woman.

Swami explains that a woman is called *gruhini* or 'the controller at home'. As a housewife or *bhaarya*, she bears all the responsibility. The housewife is also known as *saha dharma charini*, 'the one who conducts the husband along the right path'.

BABA'S COLLEGES PREPARE WOMEN TO BE IDEAL MOTHERS OF NATION

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has built five colleges for women in India. The first one is in Ananthapur. While launching that college He said, "This college is to prepare women to be ideal mothers of this nation."

Swami chose the 19th of November to be observed as International Women's Day. Today we also have the Easwamma Women's Trust, under which many medical camps are being conducted in and around Prashanthi Nilayam.

Further, it is said in *Vedic* scriptures that if a woman sheds a tear of sorrow, then prosperity, happiness and bliss will never come to that family. Therefore, no man should cause a woman to shed a tear of sorrow. He has to take care of her in every way.

That is the role of women in society as explained by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I am sure that all devotees understand the role of women in society as explained by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the *Avatar* of this Golden Age, who has a very high regard for women.

May Baba bless you!

Jai Sai Ram!

OM...OM...OM...

Asato Maa Sadgamaya

Tamaso Maa Jyotirgamaya

Mrityormaa Amritamgamaya

OM Shanti Shanti Shanti

Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji Ki Jai!

Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji Ki Jai!

Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Babaji Ki Jai!

© Copyright Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju – Puttaparthi. All rights reserved.