

Nectar of Governance

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Part 20: Women Power



Men often stumble in giving adequate respect and honour to women, both at workplace and at home. It is just for want of actual scriptural knowledge, which adequately gave highest esteem to women folk. This situation is no different in other countries also, which may not be very surprising. But, in India, where mother is the most respected in one's life according to revealed scriptures, if women are disrespected or are not given adequate respect would mean a

great insult to our Vedic wisdom. Even teasing of girls on roads, sexual abuse at workplace, threats of rape in broad daylight and many such incidents only prove the loss of Vedic culture in our hearts. "*mātrudevo bhava*" (mother is the first god), "*pitru devo bhava*" (father is revered as second god) and "*āchārya devo bhava*" (teacher is respected as third god) are the teachings of our land. Woman power, in fact, is invincible and from Acharya Chanakya's statement, women are six times more daring than men (*sahasam sadgunam chaiva*). In Mahabharata, we find a nice message on the power of woman, which was obtained simply by her service motto.

Once there was an ascetic named Kaushika, who was very austere by nature. He lived only on begging and he used to donate three fourth of his earnings and consume only one fourth. He used to spend whole time in meditation. Once, when he was in meditation, a crane contaminated him by droppings. Kaushika became very angry and looked at the crane furiously. Because of the intensity of his vision, the crane just fell down on the ground and died. Kaushika did feel about it. After this incidence, he went to collect his alms in the nearby town. He went to a house and begged for alms. The home-maker of the house was busy with her husband's service, so there was some delay to serve him alms. The delay made Kaushika furious. His face was filled with anger as he stared at the house wife. But the chaste woman calmly replied, "My dear saint, I am not a crane to be burnt with your furious vision". This statement of the woman left Kaushika utterly puzzled and asked the lady how she knew the event that took place in his hermitage. However, she didn't give

an elaborate reply, but asked him to meet a person named Dharmavyādha, who by profession is a butcher. Kaushika went to meet Dharmavyādha, only to get more puzzled. Butcher invited him saying, “I know that you have come here to meet me on the advice of a house wife”. Kaushika could not understand how the housewife and the butcher could know the events that took place far away from their places. With so much austerity he didn’t get such power till now. The housewife attained her extraordinary power due to her chastity and serving attitude towards her husband, whereas the butcher was endowed with special power due to his dedication to his mother and father. The butcher’s power was due to first service to a woman, namely mother and the house wife’s power was due to her inbuilt service mood. Though Kaushika, the ascetic, renounced everything to lead a detached life, due to lack of service, he could not achieve the powers that the house wife and the butcher could achieve. Greatness of women is adequately glorified in this story of Mahabharata. This should inspire everyone to relook into one’s approach towards women, both at workplace and at home, and achieve highest benefit by properly respecting them.

In fact, our Vedic culture gives adequate opportunity to reap wonderful benefits by proposing seven mothers for every man on the earth. If a man really takes the advantage of them, he will surely be benefitted immensely. They are birth giving mother (*ādau māta*), wife of teacher (*guru patni*), wife of a *brāhmana* (*brāhmani*), wife of the king (*rāja patnika*), the cow, the nurse (*dhātri*) and the earth (*pruthvi*). Vedic wisdom very carefully directed all the men to honour women around them to invoke auspiciousness in all spheres of life. Wherever women are disrespected or minimized, one can expect only misfortune. Thus, our ancient culture prompts everyone to honour the glories of women with heart and soul.

In the ancient times, the saintly kings used to rule the country with all respect to women. An example from Srimad Bhagavatam (4.16.17) clearly gives an idea about the same as under:

***māṭṛ-bhaktiḥ para-strīṣu patnyām ardha ivātmanaḥ
prajāsu pitṛvat snigdhaḥ kiṅkaro brahma-vādinām***

“The king will respect all women as if they were his own mother, and he will treat his wife as the other half of his body. He will be just like an affectionate father to his citizens, and he will treat himself as the most obedient servant of the devotees, who always preach the glories of the Lord.” As per Chanakya pandita, any learned man treats all women except his wife as his mother, looks at other’s property as garbage in the street and treats others as he would treat his own self. This scriptural injunction gives us direction in reorienting our outlook towards women, both at work place and at home. This makes auspiciousness to prevail everywhere.

Glories of women folk are also nicely described in the discussion between Yudhistir and Yaksha. The following are some questions with wonderful answers given, which could serve good guidance for us:

“What is weightier than the earth itself?”

“Mother is weightier than the earth.”

“Who is the friend of the householder?”

“The friend of the house holder is the wife.”

“Who is the friend bestowed on man by god?”

“The wife is the friend bestowed on man by god.”

These wonderful questions and answers, recorded in Mahabharata, give highest esteem to women in one’s life. It is only because of lack of scriptural knowledge, modern man stumbles in regard to giving respect to women and loses great opportunity of women’s power. Finally, let’s look at the message of Godhead in Bhagavad-Gita (10.34), wherein the Lord gives complete picture of women’s credentials.

***mṛtyuḥ sarva-harāś cāham udbhavaś ca bhaviṣyatām
kīrtiḥ śrīr vāk ca nārīṇāṃ smṛtir medhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā***

“I am all-devouring death, and I am the generating principle that is yet to be. Among women I am fame, fortune, fine speech, memory, intelligence, steadfastness and patience.” In this famous *sloka* of Bhagavad-Gita, the supreme Lord gives details of seven wonderful qualities of women, which make them special in the creation. Lord declares that all those special qualities are actually Himself. Because those special qualities are actually Lord Himself, they become so attractive for everyone in the world. Women containing all these seven qualities become glorious. Patience shown by women is incomparable and thus they are indispensable in any sphere of life. It is the responsibility of a leader to identify the credentials of women based on these special characteristics mentioned in the scriptures and give them higher responsibilities with accountability. Women should also look into these special qualities mentioned in the scripture for improving their glories. In this way, they can play a very important and remarkable role in governance of any system.
