CHAPTER III

The Ideal of Indian Womanhood.
The Ideal of Indian Womanhood.

The different synonyms attributed to women in India.

The concept of Ancient India regarding the role of woman in the house and the society has been explained even in the very words denoting a woman. The different synonyms attributed to women in Sanskrit literature show her various qualities. The word 'Stree' signifies motherhood. Stree means, a bearer of children.¹ Vadhu is used for a bride.² Nari is also used in the sense of wife, a person connected with nara.³ Abala signifies her physical weakness.⁴ Vama,⁵ Vanitha⁶ and Simantini⁷ glorify her beauty. The name Pathipadarshini⁸ is used to signify her bashful nature. Yoshith⁹ and Yosha³ are the general terms.

1. स्त्री : स्त्रायांत गर्भार व्यः व्यः, स्त्री = स्त्रायोत्स तुः, क्लिश्छात्रु रेतलोपः।
2. वद्धु : उद्धृते पितुग्राहातु पितुग्राहेन् (भाष्करभूमिः) बद् ऊः पुज्ज्ञोः
3. नारी : नुरङ्क्र वा नर्मगा, नृः नति (भाष्करभूमिः) -(शाखरवल्लष्ये हो नृ)
4. अबाला : नारील वर्ण वर्णाला सा (अन्वये नृ) (भाष्करभूमिः)
5. वामा : वामी ति सौन्दर्य होते, वामद्वित्वत्वतु वामूः। टापु (क्ष वक्क्ष्माः) (अमोगे वेदः दुव्वूः उद्धृते"
6. योनीता - योनि - कात - टापु, (भाष्करभूमिः) वन याचने कर्मणि वा (भाष्करभूमिः)
7. सो मानिनी : सो मानो व्या अत्तीति द्विना श्रेष्ठा दृश्यः (सो मानः देशसैन्ये)
8. प्रतीति गर्भीती : प्रतीष्ठ - प्रतित्तृत्ति, चार्ग वा पक्षारिति, पुष्य - ब्धिः - ह्रेष्ठा
9. योनिशुः : योनिशु पुराण युक्ते पुराणो रोति, गुप्त हुस्वे हुण्य फलो रौति (श. क.) (गुप्त सैन्या वाणिज्या)
10. योनिः : योनिः मिती ज्योति रौति, गुप्त ज्ञातिः वाहुलकान्तः सः (श. क.) गुप्त प्रेरी तल्लक्कः
used for woman. Mahila denotes a person worthy of worship.  

In the Russian language the word 'woman' is used in the sense of a giver of milk or suckling one.  

In the English language only very few synonyms are present to denote woman. The word woman is derived from Anglo-Saxon and it shows the dependancy of woman to man.  

Lady is a general term used for woman. It is derived from Anglo-Saxon used in the sense of mistress of a house. Many meanings are inherent in the word queen. It implies a female monarch, the wife of a king, figuratively a goddess, a woman admired for her beauty, intellect or some special ability. The word female is formed by the association with male.

1. (महिला) महिला - महिला (महिला कन्या - महिला)  
2. क्षैरी - क्षैरी फिलासियाली - हिन्दी क्षैरी फिलासियाली  
3. Woman (1. Woman, wöman O.E. Wifman; M.E. Wimman, wumman; wife & man.  
4. Lady - M.E. lefdi, leuedi, lauedi, lədɪ and c. The first syllable is from Old English. hlæf, 'loaf, bread', The origin of dige is doubtful.  
6. female - (Femal; 2. fimeil), from Modern English femelle. Old French femelle, from Latin fēmelle, diminutive of fēmina, (a woman, female animal, the second syllable influenced by male.  

"Ideals constitute the very heart and soul of a nation, the real worth and dignity of which have to be judged not only by its actual achievements, but more so by its inner inclinations and inherent endeavours towards a goal that eternally guides its destiny."¹ The actual study of a nation consists of a study of its aims and ideals. So a real understanding of Indian womanhood depends on that of its ideals in their various aspects.

In India in ancient days a son was preferred to a daughter. It is but natural. The son has more strength than the daughter. Because of this the son is more useful in helping his relatives than a daughter. In increasing the wealth of the family he is of immense help to his father. But in Rigveda the daughter's position is said to be respectable.² In Rigveda at one place a couple wishes to have many sons and daughters. Here daughters are desired along with sons. So it can be presumed that the daughter's position was not degrading during the Rig Vedic age. In another context Tarkash is praised being the father of many daughters. In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad certain rules and regulations are laid down for the birth of an intelligent daughter.³ In Apastamba Grihyasutra it is said that after returning from a journey the father must bless his daughter also along with

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1. The cultural heritage of India - Volume II. 1962 (II Edition) Published by The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture Calcutta 29, P. 601.
3. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 6.4.27
his son chanting sacred formulae.\(^1\)

**Daughter - A boon**

In the \textit{Mahabharata}, Savitri and Damayanti are described as having been born as the daughters of Ashvapati and Bheema respectively as a result of the performance of many sacrifices. Ashvapati and Bheema loved their daughters very dearly. Kunti, Devayani, Draupadi, Uttara and Sita were each the apple of their father's eye.

In \textit{Uttara Ramacharita Karmayogi} Janak says to his daughter Sita when she is about to leave to embrace a forest life, that it does not matter if she is his daughter or female disciple. Seeing her behaviour he feels reverence for her. Even though she is a female of a lower age, she is fit to be venerated by the Universe, because the virtuous are honoured with regard to their virtue and not taking into consideration their sex or age.\(^2\) In the \textit{Mahabharata}, the Manipur king considers his daughter as equal to his son. Bhishma said that a daughter is equal to a son.\(^3\)

It is said that Lakshmi dwells in a maiden.\(^4\) In times of success, coronation etc. the sight of a maiden was considered very suspicious.\(^5\) In some places the daughter is dearer than

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2. शिष्यां शिष्या का यदवि मा तच्छिन्तु तथा;,
   ब्रह्मवृक्षमयं स्तवति हत्रथि हि मा भावित इति यति।
   शिशुत्वं स्वागतं का माधु मनू रात्यासिन भवान्,
   गुणास्तु: पुनः स्वामेव गुणिषु म च लिन न च बवः। (उत्तररामचरित - ४१९)
3. पूर्णानुविष्ठा कमा - महाभारत. १२. ४५. १९.
4. नित्यनिवल्लो वक्मणी: कन्यकानु प्रतिष्ठिता | महा. १३. १०. १७.
5. महाभारत ७. ६८. २४.
the son. 1 In Manusmriti, the position of a daughter is established as equal to that of the son. 2

In Rigveda, it is said that the man who has many daughters is indeed lucky. 2 The happiness which a mother gets from a daughter even exceeds the happiness which a father gets from his son. 3 In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad one is advised to eat gingly and rice fried in ghee for the birth of a wise and long-lived daughter. 4

A good example of the affection for a daughter can be seen in the great ascetic Kanwa who could not control his tears on, bidding farewell to his adopted daughter Shakuntala. He says that if a forest dweller like himself feels distressed at the thought of parting from Shakuntala then what must have been the state of mind of householders when they get separated from their daughters. 5

In Indian culture the birth of a daughter is respectable. Vedavyasa has written that those pregnant women who listen to the Mahabharata will give birth to a son or a fortunate daughter. 6

1. मन्य्यो कैलिवद्धां सैलं पुत्रं || पितुर्मरा कव्यायां कैलिवद्धां मव तत्त्वाचिनि सूक्ताः ।
2. मृथु ६. १३०।
3. कृत्येऽं ६. ७५. ५।
5. यास्यत्त्व शुद्धमण्डित्वम् दुःख्यमण्डित्वम् शुमक्भित्वम्
कम् सत्यम् वायुक्तिकुपविन्यासपदं दर्शीपूर्णम् ।
कैलास्य मन साविकेद्रुषमपि सौजन्यार्चाकसः
पीढकलृति कृषिणा कथां तन्या विविधेषु हिन्दि : बभिष्णान प्रकाशुभ्रताः ।
6. गितिपिपुष्टेऽपि प्रमोदाय्य कव्यां वा ब्रह्मागणितम् ॥
महाभारत-स्नातकोपन १. ५. ५२।
Ideal Wife

Generally in every civilization of the world the relationship of husband and wife is considered to be a deep bond. But the excellent and great Indian idea of the devotion of a wife to her husband is second to none in the world and it is a supremely holy and great treasure of India.

Marriage, according to the ancient Indian ideas, is a sacrament and not a contract, it is a sacred bond of union between two persons for their eternal progress through the performance of their duties. In the ritual of marriage this relation through dharma is insisted upon. The marital union is also a divine dispensation, a heaven-ordained relation; therefore, no one has a right to dissolve it - man cannot and should not separate those whom the gods have joined together. She stands beside him in life and through death in the gladder life beyond, she is not separable from him, but a part of his very self.¹

The wife is identified with the Vedic Indian's house and home: 'The wife is verily the home', declares a seer and the Satapatha Brahmana asserts: 'The home has verily its foundation in the wife; and an echo of the same sentiment can be heard in later literature. In Rigveda, the woman is said to be house itself.² A building is not a house. It becomes a house only when there is a wife in it. A house devoid of a wife seems to be like a jungle.'³ What is made out of wood and stone is not

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¹ Manu, 11.29, 95.
² योगेन्द्र राज जी. २५५, ४.
³ न गुरूं हृदयमित्वः गुरः परेर्म गुरु पुरुषः।
   गुरूं राज हृदयमित्वां गुरिः परेर्म हृदयमित्वां मम।
   महामायार्ति: श्रीमति: २५५, ६६.
called a home; but only the place where there is a wife, is
called a home.\textsuperscript{1} The house (one lives in) is not the home, the
mistress of the house is called the home (proper)\textsuperscript{2}. No greater
calamity could befall a vedic householder than the untimely
death of his wife.

The ideal wife is one who gives immense satisfaction to her
husband through her bashful delicacy, heartwinning smile and good
company.

That wife who keeps her attention on her husband's comfort
and welfare, whose behaviour is pure and who keeps her nature
under control, gains fame in this world. She advises her husband
as a minister advises the king, serves him like a servant, feeds
him like a mother, in patience she is goddess earth.\textsuperscript{3}

It is due to women that the earth full of vegetation is
steady.\textsuperscript{2}

**Women - to be worshipped**

The tradition of treating women as various forms of Shakti
devi in religious books is very ancient. From ancient times
women are looked upon as embodiments of Adi Shakti in Indian
religious books. In Vedic literature women are depicted as

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textasciitilde{\text{"न गृहं काः श्रोणीं", दत्ता यत्र तुमुः!}}
\item \text{"महिसिंहरी" एकं.}
\item \text{Panchatantara IV. 81.}
\item \text{कार्यैं मन्त्री, कार्यैं श्री, माग्ने शुभ माता, श्रवणं रामा, श्रमणु पुजैः च महाया}
\text{सातुर्यैः सतिसिंहरी पतियुपासर्। कार्यत्वत्}
\item \text{स्वयः साखवी महामाना: संजया लोकमात्र;।}
\item \text{धर्मिति महीं राजनिमां सम्बन्धननास।}
\item \text{महाभारत, अनुशासन पर्व ७८. २४।}
\end{enumerate}
endeavouring, sacrificing human beings. She is honoured not only in literature but also in every day life as one worthy of worship. In society women are honoured at all times. In Ancient Indian literature women are mentioned as goddesses. In any instance, they must not be killed. This idea can be seen in Shatpath Brahmana. In Mahabharata also it is written that women are venerable; lights of the home, so they must be protected. Those women who are the well-wishers of their husbands are called mothers of the universe.

The rule in the country in which women suffer was considered unsuccessful. In such unrighteous places it is impossible for the people to stay happily. In Chandogya Upanishad Ashwapati says that there are no drunkards and adultresses among his people. Government made many rules to safeguard women's interests. Those rules were obeyed in the Ramayanic age where it is said that 'where great attention is turned on women's welfare, in that

1. स्त्री वैशा कर्मोद्वीपि मद्यभद्र घि शतपथ ब्राह्मण ५. २. २।
   अर्थात् स्त्री इत्यादि कुष्ठिजिति कर्मयां नामं।
   सर्वोत्तम ५. २. २।

2. पुजनीयां महाभागा। बुद्धवाक्य अजस्विकीद्वन्द्व।
   सूत्र: श्रीस्वात्रेववृद्धस्वरस्यमात्र रक्षया विन्यासत।
   महाभागा - उम्याधिरात्रि - २. २. १२।

3. न मे स्तनों स्तनधि न कन्यों न मिद्रवः। नागाहितामः
   गोविंदान्त्र न वर्ती रथवर्षिणी क्रयः।
   अंद्रोत्तर उपनिषदः ५. १२. ४।
country happiness dwells and where women are oppressed that
country must be abused.¹

Severe punishment to people who kill women

In Manusmriti, there is provision for severe punishment
for those people who murder women. According to this law, those
who indulge in intrigues, and who kill women, children and Brahma-
manas should be hanged.² In the Mahabharata it is stated that
to take arms against women, cows and preceptors in unrighteous.³

In the Ramayana it is written that though Ravana thought
many times to kill Sita he did not kill her because she was a
woman. But those women who committed adultery were sentenced to
death. But Shatpath Brahmana is generous towards women in this
matter also. According to it women who admit their sin can be
taken back in society and they can participate in religious
rites.⁴

In the Mahabharata it is written that those men who forsake
their innocent wives will not get shelter anywhere.⁵ In Ramayana

¹ श्रीरामं जात्यो यथा इवनवक्ष्याय ततुस्मुः
न श्रीरामं न िव यवत् चर्चीत सम्पुर्वी च। -- मनु. 3. 57
2. मनुस्मृति - 9. 232
3. श्रीरामणुशास्त्राः पाल्येण श्राद्वेजः, च। -- म. घ. सम. 41. 13
4. प्रीतिथ्राताः पल्ली युवनेयण् पुरुषोत्तम भगवते हाथं चरस्ये
तिलक मैः कन्या यो भयों साह; साहलयः। -- तत्त्वक. 2. 5. 2. 20
5. रथं शार्यश्रजस्तमं नराणं नार्तसं निष्पृहित!। -- महा. 13. 58. 13
woman is said to be the most intimate of man.⁴ According to Manu woman is worthy of veneration.

Indian Women - Source of happiness to others

Indian women are idols of sacrifice. They are embodiment of penance and silent service. They have immense faith and unbounded optimism. Nature is doing her work without creating any disturbance to others; she transforms the bud into a flower. In the same way Indian women do their duty quietly in the midst of troubles and they make others happy.

In Buddha as well as Jain literature the wife is praised. She is the most intimate friend of man.²

Sujattha, Amaradevi, Ruja Udumbera, Udayamada etc., were women who obeyed the lofty ideal of wife. Woman is considered as one among an emperor's fourteen gems.³ In times of distress women are to be protected first.⁴

In Jain literature many examples of famous and dutiful woman can be found. Malli had become a mendicant on the basis of her penance and wisdom.

Wife is the pillar of love in husband's progress. She remains with him in pleasure and sorrow, desire and gloom, prosperity and doom, and becomes a good partner in his happy as well as difficult days.⁵

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1. अनन्यपूर्ण पुरुषस्य द्वारा । — रामायण 4. 24. 34
2. धौरिया परमा स्वच । संयुक्त नित्य न, भाग 2 पृ. 37
3. दोर्धर नित्य 2. 172 - 7 उत्तरवर्त्त का साधारण महास - हा उपमललन्द्र पारिय के आलार पर
4. वृक्षक्षार्य भाग 4. 43. 48 —
5. वर्ष धार्य भनुप्रस्तथ्य धार्या गृहि स्वतः स्वच — महाभारत. भाग पार्व 74. 40
The whole society is affected as a result of her social position. Mostly it is seen that society's progress and retrogression are dependant on the history of the progress and decline of women. It is due to this that the history of the society of women has a special significance.

Wife - Part of Man.

Husband and wife are a unity. Wife is half the man. She is the 'ardhangini'. In India Mahadeva and Parvathi are carved in one figure in many caves and temples. Man is not complete without woman. Man and woman are not only one body, but one soul. Wife is the root of the three ends of life, and of all that will help him in the other world. With a wife a man does mighty deeds, and finds courage. A wife is the safest refuge for him. A man aflame with sorrow in his soul or sick with disease, finds comfort in his wife. Even a man in the grip of rage will not be harsh to a woman remembering that on her depend the joys of love, happiness and virtue. Woman is the everlasting field in which the self is born. Everywhere it is stated that a woman should be lovingly cherished, well-fed and cared for. She should never be upbraided too severely for the gods will not accept the sacrifice of the man who beats him.

1. कार्तव्य का वागमिक वौलाद द - ८ ६०० रू. पृ - १०० रू. - हा. अमलतान्त्र पन्य हेमेस्वरनी स्वेदेश, उल्लासचित्र, उत्तराखंड प्रभ य. १९६० पृ. १००
2. अर्थात ज्यादातर यथाःसत्ता तथापि ययो न रेक्षते नैच तत्प्रचारिते।
कसीहि तत्साप्तान्तिते। अर्थ यदैव तथा रेक्षतं अय यथायतें तौरं रेक्षितं च वर्णती।
-- संस्कृत प्रभ 2. 1. 10
The wife who does not create trouble for her husband, who keeps her body, mind, and words under control, alone is fit to attain her husband's world and she is called 'sadhvi' (virtuous woman) by good men.

The contemporary law-books and the puranas give pictures of the ideal wife. She was absolutely devoted to her husband. She revered him more than Shiva and Vishnu. She served the Lord by serving him. She took her meal after her husband. She did not utter his name, since this action was believed to shorten his longevity. When the husband went abroad, the wife removed her ornaments from her body. She avoided decorating herself, partaking of sumptuous food and drink, as well as dancing, singing and witnessing public festivals or spectacles. When the husband came into the house, she washed his feet, offered him a seat and betel, fanned him and wiped off his perspiration. It is stated that as the body is purified by an ablution in the Ganga, so a house is purified by the existence of a chaste wife. Wives were to be protected by their husbands from evil. The husbands were advised to be devoted to their wives and not beat or tyrannize over them.

Woman is the embodiment of Karmayoga. She serves her hus-

\[1. \text{प्रोत्त या नाभिकरित मनोवाबेदनस्यम्} \]
\[52 \text{मनुसूचीत, बुली योष्याय।} \]
band and children selflessly without expecting any fruit in return.  

Husband's and children's wish is the wife's wish. She prepares delicacies according to her husband's liking. She wears that sari which is liked by her husband, she reads those books which are agreeable to him and sings those songs which are liked by him, she spins and stitches for him. She keeps his clothes clean and looks after his health. Husband is wife's lord and God. A woman thinks that to become a servant under her husband's feet is her greatest fortune. Kaür considers the Atman as a wife and the God's servant and Almighty as his master. Indian woman says the same thing frankly. She entrusts her all to her husband. She worships him; she has merged her individuality with that of her husband.

In Indian culture the life of woman is a blazing sacrificial pit. Marriage itself is a sacrifice. After marriage women's life-long endeavour begins which ends only with her death. She saves the honour of the family. Even though she may remain hungry she somehow feeds her husband and children. If she has no food to give to her children she will caress them and make them laugh. She will not show her distress or expose her tears to outsiders. She alone knows her sorrow.

The smile on the face of her husband is the ideal Indian woman's supreme bliss. As the wife finds a smile on the face

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1. बहेल यम्न गुलाम केवली रहेगी रहेगी
   योग गन: कर्म कुदी न बहुँ। त्युक्ता स्वमुद्रुषुधे ॥
   The Bhagavadgita. Chapter V. Sloka 21.

2. 'मैं गुलाम, मैं गुलाम, मैं गुलाम तेरा। तू साहेब मेरा'
of her husband she is fully satisfied. When the husband speaks sweet words to his wife she gets full satisfaction. The virtuous Indian woman is satisfied with simple things. But even this little satisfaction is written in her fate.

Even sinful, wicked and immoral men are served by Indian women. Their ideal is great. Their aim is divine. Even when the whole world forsakes a man, his wife will not leave his company. She will stay with him in the hope that one day he may mend his manners. She tries to win him by her love and selfless sacrifice. Even though she may lose her life in the attempt to support him, a dutiful wife will not forsake her husband.

In this complex world people have to reform each other. A good teacher’s worth is known when he teaches a foolish student. If he avoids a foolish student how can he be a true guru? On finding a foolish student the stream of the teacher’s genius must flow. He must feel that he has got the right opportunity to experiment with his art. A good wife will think in the same way about her wayward husband. She will become his teacher. To reform her husband is her sacred duty. She strives with hope.

A good wife tells her husband that whatever he may do at home he must behave properly in the outer world. He can bring the filth into the house. She has the ability to clean it. She asks him to let his anger fall on her. But even though he might behave like a beast with her she advises him to transform himself into a human being when he moves in the world. Woman is the strength of the man. She teaches him

1. भारतीय वैज्ञानिक -साने मुख्य - प. 182
2. Ibid, P. 183.
civility. She makes him calm, she makes him steady; she controls him and teaches him self control and propriety of conduct.

But to do all these things there should be strength in a wife's love. It should not become weak. Her service should not become powerless. There should be confidence in that love. Crying silently is not love. Love does not cry, it gives steadiness. A good wife will not allow a single blemish to enter into her husband's character. Till death takes her away a good wife will not willingly allow her husband to fall into bad habits. Indian women obey the laws. Whatever new thought takes root in society must reach the woman. Then only will the thought be everlasting. When the principle of truth came into being she made it reach its zenith. When cows began to be considered as great it was woman who continued to worship the cow. She also showed to the world the path of fidelity to the husband. Those who come to beg near her door usually do not return without a handful of rice. God is omnipresent. So if a beggar comes to a woman's house, she thinks that perhaps a God has come in disguise to her house and she gives him alms. She observes religious vows. She has great faith in these observances. She has great yearning to go for pilgrimage.

Woman does not create new ideas; but when they come into being she keeps it abiding. In the house where the husband is fully happy with his wife and the wife is contented with her husband there good fortune dwells always.¹

¹. चन्द्रमा शार्यमा शार्यर्मा शार्यर्मा तप्त्र स ।
यहं मनोध्वे कुले ग्रन्थस्कर्षण तत्र वे ब्रजम् ॥
गुन. चतुर्यो भाष: 60
In India woman is called 'Annapurna' (bestower of food). Her charity never ends. She gives and gives. In this giving she finds supreme satisfaction. She is full even though she may be empty. She is the winner even though she may have fallen in love.1

Women cannot live without sacrificing. In the journey of life woman is the encourager of man. A vacillating, scattered, weary and desperate man on finding a woman's intimate love forgets his whole weariness. A new throbbing and energy springs up in him. A new life, new blood begins to run in his veins.

Naturally there is a vanity in man. Through the long ages of history woman has softened man's pride, and won him over through her service, love and gentleness. She controlled the nature of man. She taught the cruel man the lesson of non-violence. This process continues to this day. By the weapon of non-violence she has succeeded till now and she will make use of it in the future also.

In the absence of women's smooth and affectionate touch there will not be any pleasure in man's daily life and his necessities; everything will become uninteresting and devoid of splendour.2 With their natural sweetness and their inborn fortune-love, women easily make their existence useful.3

1. रिका होकर शी वह पूर्ण है। अनुरक्ता होकर शी वह रविकल्याणी है।
   -- नारीः मुक्तकल्याणी और क्याणी -- रामनाय युग

2. रितवयों के रिनाय हायों का सर्व मलुब कहीं तो पुलक के रोजमर्रा की रिजवयों और उसके आश्वस्तकालों में रस हो न रहे, धन्या बच नी रस और शी हो न हो जाये।
   --- शी बनन -- रवी नन्याय ठाकुर

3. Ibid.
a woman does her domestic duty and serves her husband loyally, she will be blessed by God even though she may be neglected as a trifling and insignificant being by her husband.

Rabindranath Tagore says about woman, "when she is immersed in domestic affairs a sweet song emerges from her body like that which arises as a result of the flow of mountain streams on the pieces of small pebbles."

A virtuous woman is the best light of God which increases the lustre of the world. The life of women is such that they are able to hide the fierceness of their nature and can transform their sharp voice into a sweet one. Woman has surrounded the heart of the world with her deep tears like the ocean which surrounds the earth.

Man is the creator and woman is the lover. The virtues of women are mercy, tenderness, peace, love, dedication and sacrifice. Brutality, violence, rage and hate are not her natural qualities.

In Aitreya Brhmana it is written that, because the husband takes birth again from his wife, the wife is called Jaya. She is his second mother.

1. श्री मात्र समय तू हमें गुड़कार्य में ली न रहती है उस समय तेरे शरीर के रॉसी मौर रागी गनी निकलती है वसी छोटे छोटे पत्तियों के दुकड़ों के साथ, पर्वत प्रोत के छोटे करने से निकलती है --- रचना नह भी

2. जयते पुनः रैतरेय चाहुतम 2 - 7 -13
In Julia dictionary man's definition is given as "an animal which is taught by women." Fundamentally woman is the teacher of man; when he is a child as well as when he is a youth.  

When the surroundings are full of darkness man seeks solace in the lap of a loving woman. A Chinese proverb states that "man thinks that he knows, but woman knows much better than him."  

If women are allowed to act according to their sweet will without the guidance of anyone, they will neither be more firm nor less firm than men. According to a foreigner woman's etiquette is man's beautiful invention.  

In the Hindu view the state of a householder is highly appreciated. Just as all rivers go and meet in the ocean, so too the stage of a householder is the basis of the other three asramas.  

In the view of Rabindranath Tagore the stage of a householder is the main basis of all religions. According to him woman is neither a plaything nor can she be forsaken. Love for her home is the Indian woman's life.
In Kumudini, Rabindranath Tagore says that whether the husband is good or bad, for the proof of the prestige of a chaste woman he is only a touchstone. In 'Vida' he has written that woman is the treasure of penance. She is not an immovable property, but wealth, a heap of gem. Softness, slenderness, dependancy; these are the qualities attributed to women by the wise sages.

It is said that God divided Himself into two forms; that of a husband and wife. Ideal woman is the symbol of that love which takes man to the greatest height. Those men are in ignorance who think that women are instruments of pleasure. It is true that women are helpers but people should not forget that first of all she is a human being. Purity and mystery are revolving round her. She should not be treated like a treasure or servant. The woman also has a soul and generally she acts the part of a bridge for man to reach reality. If she is simply made a mistress of a house or mother and her status degraded, her service is taken for common things, then her best part will not be revealed. Just like man every woman should get the opportunity to develop the fame of her soul.

1. पत्नी साधना को ऐसा अर्थ है | यह अबल समालत नहीं चलता है | अग्निक जानकारि है -- रेवा (रामेश भाऊ)।
2. शुद्धत्व च तपस्या च परायो नस्त्येय च
सो गुणा को पौरा प्रीति चर्मशायुं विकारते |।
3. व इव श्वास्मार्म द्रवे धापालक्षमः ततः शोक तपस्य पत्नी चात्माताम॥ शुद्धार्थ्यक ऊपरी नमह।।1.4.3
Tagore's character Chitra says - "I am neither a goddess worthy of worship, nor one who craves for sympathy, worthy of being thrown away like an ant. If you keep me in company in times of distress and courage, you will see my real form. The woman who does not bear hardships is not a full individual because she is not purged of sin by sufferings. Uma did not win Shive by her physical beauty; but she gained victory through penance and hardships. Women have a wonderful ability to bear sufferings and if they do not remain faithful to that capability they will lose one of their splendours, which would have made their life exuberant. The tradition of centuries has made Indian women the most unselfish, self-sacrificing, the most courageous and the most dutiful in the whole world. ¹ She is proud of her power of suffering.

Swami Vivekananda said "women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.

India has a reverence for women that is unmatched in the world. Indian methods have an advantage over others. India has the traditions of Sangehitra, Lila, Ahalya Bai and Mitra Bai. Indian women are pure and selfless, strong with the strength that comes of touching the feet of God.

To the women of this country Vivekananda's advice is, "believe in India and in our Indian faith. Be strong and hopeful and unashamed, and remember that with something to take, ¹

1. लर्न और गमन - श्र. रायाकुमार, प. 186

प्रवक्त - राजपाल रचन राज, रिली, अनु. रचराज
Hindus have immeasurably more to give than any other people the world.¹

There was perhaps no stronger champion of the cause of women than Rabindranath Tagore, but at the same time he held that women have their own sphere and should complement the work of men rather than compete with them.²

According to him Indian women, with their simple graceful ornaments, their ever cheerful faces, have kept their homes sweet by means of their tenderness, love and graciousness. Sometimes their eyes are dimmed with tears when they are in troubles; sometimes their simple fair faces, under love's oppressive sway, assume a tender melancholy hue, patient and grave. But woman's afflictions, viz. cruel husbands and unnatural sons, are to be found everywhere in the world.

Tagore stood for a society in which individuals would find the fullest opportunity of self expression through creative and co-operative activities. There must not be great disparities in wealth, power or social position among its members. Each individual must be valued for his distinctive contribution to social life.

According to Kaka Kalelkar restricted companionship of woman makes man gentle and cultured; protects his activities from becoming cruel, and gives him a glimpse of purity.

Woman in the various relationships of mother, sister, wife, daughter etc. bestows on man vivid feelings of affection, sympathy, love and she performs various beautiful and rigid penances on behalf of man from his birth till death. Even after man's death women do not hesitate to do austere penance to keep him alive in her memory. Where will man get a more truthful reality and more throbbing ideal than hers?

Woman is also an attraction to satisfy man's lust. This activity is common among animals. But women rising above the level of animals have installed man in the roles of obedient son, authoritative father, faithful brother and loving husband. As a result of this, even the valiant man of the constructive age humbly bowed his head before the boons of mother, who was like multifarious nature and his grateful heart remembered the idol of woman on the occasion of naming things commencing from material wealth to divine knowledge. When man spoiled this beautiful and powerful reality and breaking this ideal of life made her a servant for giving liquor and he said that woman is only this; then he proclaimed to the world his own undeveloped intellect and stoney heart. ¹

Woman is the companion of man. She has equal mental abilities like those of man. She has the right to participate in the subtest part of man's activity. In her field of activity woman has the right to an eminent position like that of man. This should be in the natural way and not merely the result of learning to read and write.


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In Mahatma Gandhi's opinion, the whole time of woman should not be spent in household work. Slavery in the kitchen is the remnant of barbarism. Both the sexes are dependent upon one another. The existence of one in the absence of the other is unthinkable. That which lowers the status of one will be responsible for the destruction of both the sexes.

Woman is the living embodiment of service and sacrifice. Nature has gifted her with the aptitude for selfless service. In this field man cannot hope to reach anywhere near woman. Woman has a sympathetic heart which melts on seeing other people's difficulties. His request to women is that they must be the idol of sacrifice and they should lift not only the members of their own sex but also the nation.

Women can rise to the same heights as men. Chastity is not one which grows in a tightly closed room. The wall of purdah cannot safeguard it. It should develop inwards. It should have the courage to face the world like the chastity of Sita. The chastity which is not powerful enough to face man's glance is worthless.

If man is to become a real man he should have faith in his wife. Varahamihira in Brihat Samhita says: "Tell me truly, what faults attributed to women have not been also practised by men? Men in their arrogance treat women with contempt but do they really possess more virtues? .... Men owe their birth to women. O ungrateful wretches, how can happiness be your lot when you condemn them?"

Thus, towards the close of the ancient period women's social and domestic life had generally suffered a radical
change and they had come to occupy a position of inferiority, both at home and in society. Then a new idea of women emerged: the idea of a human being endowed with the virtues of humility, obedience, sacrifice and self-abnegation and these virtues came to be looked upon as ideals of Indian womanhood. Such women have been pictured in Indian literature as models of Indian womanhood and have held positions of glory in Hindu culture for ever a thousand years. Even in this depressed phase women were accorded a high status, though perhaps of a different kind. Later Gandhiji extolled these qualities of sacrifice and suffering in Indian womanhood and drew upon their inner strength and courage to bring them into the freedom struggle.

Gandhiji said - "To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman."

Women is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who, again, suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day?
Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is her privilege to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for the nectar.

Let not woman, who can count many heroines among them, ever despise their sex or deplore that they were not born man. There is much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do likewise. But the wish is fruitless. Gandhiji advised people to be happy in the state into which they are born and do the duty for which nature had destined them.

The woman will have to determine with authority what she needs. Gandhiji's opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problems must be one in essence. The same soul is dwelling in both man and woman. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the active help of the other.

Nevertheless there is bifurcation at some point. While both are fundamentally one, it is equally true that in the form there is a vital difference between the two. Hence the vocations of the two must also be different. The duty of motherhood which the vast majority of women will always undertake, required qualifications which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially the mistress
of the house. Man is the breadwinner and woman is the server of food. She is always the care-taker. Rearing of babies is her special privilege. Without her loving care the race must become extinct.

Gandhiji was uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. He was of opinion, she should labour under no legal disability to which man is not subjected. He treated daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality. He truly believed that woman was man's equal and both were jointly responsible for conducting the affairs of society.¹

Sita is the idol of Indian womanhood through the ages. Sita's life-long sacrifice inspires everybody. In Valmiki Ramayana Sita is described as goddess earth who holds the entire earth and who is superior to Lakshmi devi.² After Ravana's death Mandodari laments that it is owing to the curse of virtuous wives who were made widows by Ravana that he met his doom.³ It can be inferred from this, that during the Ramayana period virtuous woman's curse had great effect on the lives of their oppressors. So men always honoured women for fear of becoming a prey to their anger.

Sita was the manifestation of calmness. She was a tender


². कुप्यायाम मुक्या राधि थी भगवताकाम। -- वास्मि रङ्के रामायण, कुड़ुम्बलङ्कुः

³. काल्वण रेणव राज्यु कृता नैका कृत्यके रता। पीताका र्मणारा गुम्बुलक्षणे रता। 11७१ -- कवि सगर 114
flower. When Sita was forsaken by Rama, Kalidas depicts her as saying "After the birth of her child she will do penance looking towards the sun to get Rama as her husband in her next birth also and she may not get separated from him." This is the greatest ideal of Indian women. Though Sita is abandoned in a pregnant state by Rama she still loves him. No thought of taking revenge arises in her mind. This devotion of a wife towards her husband is indeed admirable.

As Swami Vivekananda rightly asserted, all the various ideals of Indian womanhood, throughout the long and chequered history of India have been concentrated and consummated in this one, unique, incomparable ideal of Sita as wife, as mother, as one endowed with infinite purity of heart, strength of character, courage and confidence.

Mother - In Indian culture God is worshipped also in the form of mother. Mother who is responsible for child's birth should be served with great devotion. The Indian woman's infinite grandeur consists in the role of a mother. She is the supporter of children, husband and his principles. She loves everybody, bestows benedictions and serves humanity. The devotees also preferred the word 'mother' to God because the process of nurturing, taking everyone's responsibility upon one's shoulder which is God's pastime, is done by a mother.

1. साद तम: बुधी नौ वस्त्रदेशं: उन्नी प्रसृते।\nकरूः वधाः मे जनमस्तश्रेणिः लक्ष्यं भार्ष न च रिप्रस्थोः: -- रघुवंश 14-धर्म 66

2. भारतीय समृद्धि में देवका की माता के रूप में श्री उपासना की गई है

-- भारतीय शिलालट - रघुवंश पंचम
single-handedly. As a synonym for Almighty, the most appropriate word is mother. Perhaps this may be the cause of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's Shakti worship. If there is anything by which God's infinite love can be imagined, it is mother. So in Indian culture mother is worshipped everywhere.¹

Indian culture is maternal. To circumambulate mother is equal to circumambulating the entire earth. To serve one's parents is enough for attaining salvation. Except mother there is no other God.² One cannot be free from the debt to one's mother.

On auspicious occasions first of all mother's blessings are invoked. Hinduism looks on woman as the Shakti of Shiva, the Power behind the Throne, the one Half of that Half-Lord-Half-Lady which constitutes the one, "Ardhanareeshwara". In the words of Louis Jaccoliot, the French writer, India of the Vedas entertained a respect for women amounting to worship.

"Nowhere is the unique idea of the Motherhood of God so strongly expressed and recognised as in India", says, Vivekananda and he proceeds, "The mother is so highly honoured in India that the Hindus are not satisfied until they see divinity in the form of the earthly mother ——— According to the Hindu religion each woman, whether old or young, is the living representative of the Divine Mother on earth. There is no other country in the world where every living mother is respected as incarnation of the Divine mother, a Goddess, who

1. बाहुबली श्रावण - सती रोय उपायनमस्तः
2. न मातृं परं देवतम् ।
protects all as her own children."

Society's progress and decline is based on the responsibilities which a woman bears in the role of mother. The personality of man develops in the lap of mother. Mother is his primary and most important school.¹

The qualities which inspire a child from his mother later become part of his character. The mother is the moulder of the son's character.

In Taittiriya Upanishad mother is said to be equal to deity. Many Rishis' names were associated with their mother. Mahides, Aitareya, Jatukamya, Katyayaniputra and Devaki Putra requires special mention. According to Gautama, mother is superior even to father and preceptor.²

In Apastambha and Baudhayana Dharma Sutra it is stated that the mother who is expelled from society cannot be deserted by the son.³ In Kaushithaki Upanishad murder of mother is said to be a great offence. But this sin can be expiated by divine knowledge.⁴ In a Vedic quotation the fruit of killing mother is said to be a life in hell.⁵

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¹ गुरुणा वैव सरवे० माता शरणातो गुरु भवामाणि । - महाभाषरस । - १९६ - १६
² यौवनां । २. ५।
³ आपस्तां । १०. २८-९ माता पुष्यध्वनि ध्वन्यासंस्कृष्ट्रिकमार्यर्धाते तत्वो बुधृणा रेणन्त्रा पौर्तावामायेष ।
⁴ वैतरामे तृ गातर रोग्मृगप्यांतोऽधार्मिकमाणि -- वैव मातृकृष्टे उपायेन । 
⁵ पारिजन । ३. २. ८८ पर गृहित्व दृष्टां 'माहृत्वा सत्यम् नर्वने प्रेममोक्त।
In Baudhāya as well as Jain literature mother has an honoured place. In mother's old age it is the principal duty of the son to look after her. In the attempt to make his mother happy the son must not mind even his life which means that the son should sacrifice everything at the altar of his mother's happiness. At one place in Jatak Katha it is said that a motherless person should be considered fatherless also. In Jain literature reference is seen about a king named Pusana who was very devoted to his mother and who took his bath and food only after his mother had her bath and took her food. This shows that mother was very much honoured in those days. In Mahabharata it is said that there is no better religion than truth and no teacher equal to a mother. Here the glory of mother is installed. Those who make their mothers unhappy will not get shelter anywhere. She is even greater than the earth. Those who revere their mother win this world as well as the other.

In Manusmriti it is written that a religious preceptor is ten times greater than the teacher; father is hundred times greater than the preceptor; and mother is thousand times greater than the father.

In Taittiriya Upanishad mother is given the first place among those who are to be respected. The development of womanhood is motherhood.

Rabindranath Tagore compares mother to the rainy season. She gives water and fruits, removes distress, dispels dryness and redintegrates people's defects.

1. नास्ति सत्यान्तरो धर्मं नास्ति मातृभक्षणं गुरु
2. न दुः मामार्थाक्षेत्स्यायाम् मोक्षं कै सँहित्कु म्या । — महाभारत 4. 313. 60
3. पुष्प करोति जीवनं ते तर्पयो भूमिक्षा ॥
Mother works for the comfort and delight of her offspring; she appeases his hunger, consoles him in distress and takes care of him during his illness.

The immortal epic of India 'The Mahabharata' is resplendent with a galaxy of great women fulfilling their destinies, pursuing their ideals, and attaining their ends in different spheres of life in a manner at once simple and superb.

Mothers used to guide their sons throughout their lives. An example can be seen in Kunti in Mahabharata. When Krishna failed in his attempt to persuade Duryodhana somehow, Kunti feared that the affectionate Dharmaputra might turn his face away from war for fear of bloodshed. She advises Yudhishtira that he must leave the thought of gaining his rightful place by peaceful methods. He must not waste his time in expectation of a favourable occasion. Kings or illustrious men are not slaves of circumstances but they themselves create favourable circumstances.¹

Baka was a dangerous demon. To save the Brahmana's son who had given them refuge Kunti does not hesitate from sending her son Bheema to fight with Baka. Even though she loves her son she thinks that the Brahmana's son's life is more precious. In this context Kunti shows great courage and devotion to duty. Yudhishtira tells Krishna that his affectionate mother had saved

¹ कले जा कारण राजा राजा वा कलकारण ।
शीत से संयोग भा भ्रूणा कलस्य कारण । -- महाभारत उद्वौगचर्य 132. 16
them from the fear of Duryodhana and made them cross the ocean of death like the boat which helps men to cross the ocean. ¹

The single case of Gandhari proves what heights of excellence wifehood and motherhood could reach. An exemplary wife, a sahadharmini in the truest sense of the word who went to the length of bandaging her own eyes for the sake of her blind husband Dhrtarastra, she yet never hesitated to remonstrate with him when she thought he was in the wrong. That was why she openly and firmly requested him to disown their sinful sons – Duryodhana and the rest.² Gandhari was a gem among women who is immortal in the history of Indian culture for her character, foresight, and faith in justice.³ Gandhari had said that Pandavas deserved to be looked after by her like her own sons.⁴ She knew that her son Duryodhana was doing injustice to his cousins. So when Duryodhana on the eve of his

1. या सा बाह्यात् प्रभृत्यस्मान १ १४ रूपस्मानाति जनार्दन ।
बलसं श्रेष्ठसुभु मच्चरणां नो विभावमाक जनार्दन ॥

2. Ibid. 11 - 75 - 8-10
3. क्षत्रीय समाज में नारी आकर्षण का विकास - गुप्तकालीन रिश्तेदारी पु. 52
4. महाभारत स्तोतर्पं १३. १३ । उद्योग ८८. ५. २०
departure for war asks for Gandhari's blessings she did not
bless him for his victory. Instead she tells him that right-
eousness will prevail. This superb injunction has become a
proverb in India.

Chatrapati Shivaji's mother Jijabai was very courageous
and God-fearing. She moulded her son's character according to
her wish. It was because of her guidance that Shivaji became
famous for his bravery. There are numerous such examples of
great women in the history of India.

Rabindranath Tagore gives the opinion that, with the
progress of European civilisation women are becoming more and
more unhappy. Comparing the old maid of English society and
girl widow of India he observes that outwardly their lot is
the same, but there is a marked difference between the two in
one respect. The Hindu widow's feminine nature never gets a
chance of growing sterile by lying idle. Her lap is never
bare, her arms never idle, her heart never unattached. She
acts, now as a mother, now as a daughter, now as a companion.
Throughout her life she remains affectionate and engaged in
the service of others. During daytime she does household work.
In her spare time she reads the Ramayana or Mahabharata and
narrates stories to youngsters. Tagore continues that the
English old woman spends her time nursing puppies and four
or five charitable societies. Loveless, vacant liberty is

1. यतो चर्चितलो जयः

2. Women of East and West. Edited by B.S.Gujrati. Hero
Publications-Lahore. Woman's Lot in East & West. Tagore
in Bengali. Translated by Jadunath Sarkar.
a terrible thing for women. Though an English woman's character is left imperfect if she is not educated, the practical education of our women acquires far greater completeness even though she may not be well educated.

The western woman had been successful in gaining social, political and personal power, so that there is a tendency in her to give importance to her personal values. In the social field the ideal of equality is present. She wishes for recognition of her separate existence from man and she proves her worth in all fields of activity.

Modern women denies home to be the temple of woman's honour, home-making and motherhood to be her worthy functions, and children deserving her care and attention. The domestic tie is much loser in Europe than with us. An English man may imagine that a woman cannot happy unless she plays lawn tennis or dances at balls. But Indian people believe that woman's true happiness is found only in loving and being beloved.

The western ideal is directed towards worldly pleasures. Therefore, moral values are languid there. The definition and ideal of moral is different from the customary tradition. In their view point society should have nothing to do with any sexual relationship which is harmful to nobody. Dr. Norman Haire is of the opinion that the sexual relations of two

mutually consenting adults must be considered the private concern of the two individuals involved so long as the sexual rights of others are not interfered with and no undesirable children result.¹ So it seems that the control of sexual appetite is not necessary for the western woman. As they have got opportunity to work in all the fields their responsibility has increased.

The Indian outlook gives great importance to the preservation of woman's sexual sanctity. The ideal of Indian woman is clear only from the background of moral values, and not from the attempt to establish an independent personality. The limit of the western woman's power is vast. Too much independence has given rise to her mental agony. But in India great importance is given to the establishment of propriety; so no need is felt for anxiety. Even though the Indian woman may seem to be uninteresting owing to some difficulties, her conflicts are mostly outward and compared to the western woman it is less painful.

"I should very much like our women to have your intellectuality but not if it must be at the cost of purity", said Swami Vivekananda in New York.² Intellectuality is not the highest good. Morality and spirituality are the things for which Indians strived. Vivekananda believed

that though Indian women might not be so learned, they are
more pure. Swamiji deplored the western habit of appreci-
ciating woman's physical beauty. He was of the opinion that
men and women should meet on a ground of common humanity
ignoring the question of sex.

In the west, the woman is wife. The idea of womanhood
is concentrated there—as the wife. To the ordinary man
in India, the whole force of womanhood is concentrated in
motherhood. The wife rules in the western home but the mother
is the ruler in an Indian home. The mother is subordinate to
the wife in western homes.¹ The Hindu mind is afraid of
those ideals which say that the flesh must cling unto the
flesh. According to the Hindu mind the great mission of
woman is to become a mother. The soul is not given superiority
in the west. But the Indian ideal is different. In India pro-
minence is given to the inner personality. Here woman is
honoured not on the basis of beauty of her physical parts but
on the purity of her conduct.

Greatness of Indian Ideal.

In spite of occasional lapses, India is a country that
has always preached and practised the highest philosophical
and ethical doctrines of equality and fraternity of universal
love and service. Hence, according to ancient Indian tradition,
there is no distinction between man and man, all being equally
Brahman. Woman is even said to be superior to man.² Genius

² स्त्री च निशेषान्तः – जल्यायन गुण्य यो. १. १. ७
inheres in the soul—it makes no distinction between man and woman. That is why the ideals of India are alike for men and women. There is a general misconception that the ideals of Indian woman are entirely different from, nay even opposed to, those of men. It is true that as mothers, as creators and sustainers of life on earth, women have some special functions to perform, some special paths to follow, some special ideals to strive after. These ideals elevate and enliven them. The women of India have been eternally inspired by the common twin ideals of unity and equality, greatness and fullness, purity and perfection. These have been equally manifested in all the walks in a woman’s life, domestic, social and spiritual. In India greatness and fullness constitutes the very life-blood, the very soul of women. In the home or outside, it is these fundamental ideals of infinity and universality that have illumined the lives of Indian women, throughout the chequered history of Indian womanhood, infinity implying depth of life, universality its breadth.

During the age of Smritis woman’s position became degraded. They were bracketed with the Sudras.

During the modern age, the women of India are standing at cross-roads. The impact of foreign, western ideas and ideals on India and Indian society which has been almost one-sided has changed people’s lives. That is why the women

1. संक्षरो रॉ ह जाध्ये पर नयन चौलामय व द्रभ अये ये ।
   — रामचंद्र — काव्यगो माता पू. 55
of India now find themselves facing an unexpected dilemma, namely the choice between the old and the new, the eastern traditionalism and the western modernism.

At this juncture in the lives of Indian women, both the ancient ideals of spiritualism and homebound life seem to be out of date; a modern woman seems not to care for religion and spiritual perfection, nor hanker after domestic life as before. It has been repeatedly seen in the long and variegated history of this country that its inmost soul has ever remained untouched in spite of all external appearances to the contrary. That is why even during the turbulent modern age of over-materialism, over-realism, over-individualism and over-cynicism there is clear proof that the immortal ideals of Indian womanhood are still there, inspiring and heartening thousands of women in all walks of life.

The above fact is proved by the sublime personality of the Holy Mother, Sri Saradamani Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. It is she who at the beginning of the present century combined in her lofty life the twin ideals of a Brahmavadini and a Sadyovadh in a manner at once unique and inspiring.¹

What strikes one most in the life of the Holy Mother is this wonderful synthesis of ordinary home-life and the loftiest spirituality. That these two are not opposed to each other, but that spirituality is the very basis of

¹. The Cultural Heritage of India. Volume II. P. 602.
ordinary life, is the greatest message of the life of the Holy Mother to all and sundry. She said that even those who led an ordinary domestic life must be brahmavadinis, in the sense of being spiritually minded and moulding their lives according to spiritual and ethical maxims. They must not lead an uncontrolled and unworthy life because of their having chosen a domestic life. They must not remain submerged in the mire of worldly life, but must spring up like beautiful lotuses, spreading their fragrance far and wide.

This brief survey of the ideals of Indian womanhood will suffice to show that in spite of many changes regarding educational facilities and domestic, social, political, legal and economic rights the women of India have remained fundamentally unchanged. This is due to their unchanging vision and outlook. The ideals of a nation are not something to become static with age. As the nation cannot change its soul, so it cannot also change its ideals. The sameness of its ideals shows its firmness of purpose and dynamism of outlook, and enables one to gauge its depth of feeling and strength of will. Hence the eternity of Indian ideals is something to be proud of, the bed rock of Indian culture, the strongest cement in the multifarious Indian civilization which is a unity in diversity. This is specially so when this immortal ideal of India, for men or for women, outside or inside, is, one and only one, viz. spiritual development. The women of India, too have been imbued with the same supreme ideal all through the ages. As housewives, as ascetics, and as both combined, they have always kept burning the torch of their inner spirituality, purity and beauty, their inborn softness and spirit of service.