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WOMAN & SOCIETY



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by
N. A. SARMA,

M. A.

School of Economics and Sociology,
University of Bombay.

FOREWORD BY:
Smt. KAMALADEVI



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Woman & Society

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In devoted friendship
to SAROJINI
who put me on to this



WORDS OF EXPLANATION AND GRATITUDE

The question of the relations between the sexes and the mutual obligations between individuals and the society is of immense and live interest, particularly in the next few crucial years ; for, now, our country is in the throes of a ' new ' life,—political, economic and social. What we decide and do in this transition phase will largely mould our political and social framework for many years to come. We are determined to weed out all that is sordid in our midst. We do not want to amble along in the centuries-old muck of ignorance, poverty and superstition. Nor do we wish to leave things alone and just manage to ' muddle through ' to some sort of better life, surrendering ourselves to the freaks of Fates and the clumsy ways of Chance. We must make our destiny through our efforts. And, in any such overall programme for thoroughly shaking up our inert society from its slumbers and for revitalising it into a vigorous life of grim toil and proud achievement, woman's place in society must be assigned the highest priority, for it is not at all ' in right ordering ' today and it has never been anything but an unenviable lot. Political freedom would prove no better than a mere broken shell if not accompanied by economic security and well-being, and more important still, by social equalitarianism and freedom. We cannot keep down one-half of our race and still feel free—can we ? Nor, at the same time, can there be social harmony if man or woman were to go off the rails without rudder and compass. I have tried in this little book to avoid mere impressionism, though I do not claim that this brochure is strictly an academic or scientific treatise. To every opinion I have ventured to express in these pages, I have done my best to adduce supporting evidence and facts, historical and other—so that, in some places, the treatment may be



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felt to be rather 'heavy'. If so, I can only submit that it is the inevitable price I have had to pay in pursuit of the objective I set before myself.

Mere words are inadequate to express my debt to Professor G. S. Ghurye, Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Bombay, but for whose kindly back-pat and constant guidance this effort might have withered away in the embryo itself. Shrimati Kamaladevi has been kind enough to read through the manuscript and favour me with a foreword, despite the heavy pressure of public work on her time. I am deeply grateful to her.

My thanks are due to Sjt. Bhukhanwala of the 'Padmas' for expediting the publication and to my friend Gouri Shankar for his helpful criticism. This monograph has benefited quite much from his suggestions.

N. A. SARMA

September, 1946.



FOREWORD

Notwithstanding the vast changes undergone by society, the problem of woman still looms large on the world's horizon. As Mrs. Deighton Pollack says in her book "Women of Today": "In spite of much progress towards equality, life remains and will probably always remain more difficult for a woman than for a man." For although the opportunities have increased, it has been through force of abnormal circumstances such as the exigencies of war, rather than a keener social awareness and recognition of equality as a principle. For instance in Japan where women had come to be as much in evidence in most spheres of life as in Russia or America, their social or political equality was far from recognised. Nay they did not even enjoy civic franchise. Thus while expansion of opportunities is the means and undoubtedly the safest means to social equality, it is not by any means the end itself. Nor does such progress run in a straight line as the definite set-back given by the advent of Nazism has proved.

N. A. Sarma's book 'Woman and Society' traces the general life of women from the earliest to the present day, posing the various factors that have stimulated or impeded progress. This historical approach to and scientific analysis of the subject, is of considerable value and commendable in a topic which is so often treated sentimentally. He has also done well in showing that movement is not always progress nor progress something that moves on like a connected chain. For while he points out the high advantages enjoyed by women in the olden days in India, Egypt and other countries, he also shows, the concept of *patria potestas* was equally well established and the husband was the Supreme Lord and complete surrender to him was enjoined on the women. Similarly, although Islamic law has given



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woman an unusual degree of equality, social conventions have suppressed her just as much as other women.

Conceding the principle of equality really means recognition of woman's inherent right to develop her own personality. The author has thus pertinently pointed out that the development of such a personality is bound to affect existing conceptions of social morality and marriage and the emphasis is gradually but firmly shifting from the group—family unit to one of companionship between man and woman, and from the obligation to bear children to one of children being merely the flowering and fruition of sex-companionship more an extension of it so as to make marriage—comradeship fuller and richer. This is one of the biggest factors today revolutionising our entire social phase and bound to have far-reaching repercussions on our future society.

The old idea that liberation of women is indispensable to the growth of a democratic state, is now realised as one-sided. For equally, the rise of a Fascist State also means the end of the liberation of woman and the processes work both ways. Vigilance and wariness is called for on both fronts.

Equally, even while considerable alarm is still maintained about the threat of falling birth rate, it is at the same time being realised that the threat to man's survival comes not so much from planned families but bad social and economic conditions of living for the larger section of humanity, and even more so from the rapid forging of deadlier weapons of destruction and the ever opening vistas of coming World Wars. These today offer an unchallengeable case for recognising Woman's right to regulate her progeny.

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KAMALA DEVI



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Woman and Society

'A hen is not a bird : nor a woman, a human being'.

—*an old Russian Adage*

'Every cook must learn to rule the State'.

—*Lenin*

'To be of any value, I must be myself'.



CHAPTER I

The Martyrdom and Humanization of Woman
Introduction

It was Cicero who proclaimed that 'the verdict of history is the victory of liberty'. It was more a prophecy, 'a sweet and charming illusion', than a realized experience. In fact, if at all there is any verdict of history, it is ambiguous. Its interpretation depends on the psychological bias of the social philosopher, whether he is an optimist or a pessimist, a humanitarian or a cynic, a lover of freedom or a votary of authority. The integration of related facts, or the interpretation of the course of history, depends on the historian's own prejudices and preferences. The role of history reveals what the investigator wants to read into it. However, one fact stands out clearly that 'progress and deterioration are permanent possibilities of social history' (Schiller) according as human genius or human folly predominates. Even in the case of individual master-minds is seen at times this alteration between buoyant enthusiasm for dynamism and preference for established 'proved wisdom of experience' for instance, in his *The City of God*, St. Augustine effects a retreat from the flaming individualism he exhibits in his earlier writings, *The Confessions*. The fallacious belief that progress is automatic should be exercised. No ideal can survive and progress without concerted and patient human effort. Ours is a continually changing world characterized by a living process of decay and growth. Sublime ideals and realized experiences play an equal part.



✓ What is 'can only be bettered if 'what should be' is constantly in view. The *elan vital* of human progress is the faith in attaining the Perfect State. Perfection may be impossible but is not inconceivable. When dreams vanish, decline surely commences. Centuries after, even today, the struggle for the assertion and defence of human freedom is not at an end—and inevitably so—for the price of liberty is constant vigilance. The *elixir* of human freedom still eludes our grasp. However, there is no denying that against intermittent onslaughts, the ideal of liberty has survived and has progressed far. The same is true of woman's emancipation. The end has not been actually attained but most of the hurdles in the path have been successfully negotiated. Maybe, as Mrs Pollock says, "inspite of much progress towards equality, life remains, and will probably always remain, more difficult for a woman than for a man" (Mrs Dighton Pollock, *Women of Today*, p. 28). If a rational, not an oracular, prophecy may be hazarded, woman will be the last 'serf' to be universally freed and that will mark the crowning achievement of civilization. To suggest, as some overjealous guardians of men's interests do, that already a sort of matriarchate has materialized with the woman lording it over man is a deliberate falsehood. To think that equality of sexes has been secured is an illusion. To argue that such equality is impossible, even if it were laudable, because of biological differences is pseudo-scientific. Contrary to popular opinion, even in U. S. A., an authoritative and recent study reveals, "probably the most important conclusion.... is that wives make the major adjustment in marriage" (Burgess and Cottrell, 1939). In great Britain even today equality between the sexes does not really exist. It was but recently, in 1942, that Mr Pethic Lawrence referred to one aspect of this inequality—"women have always asked two things. They have asked for opportunity and recognition and as far as opportunity is concerned it has largely come their way during the present war. When we come to rec-



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ognition I confess that I do not think we have played quite fairly by them. Recognition in words is very useful and flattering: but I do not think we have altogether had recognition in deeds—deeds meaning, mainly, remuneration. We have a standard in services that has been expressed roughly as a 'two-thirds standard'—that a woman is worth financially about two-thirds of a man. We have to put women as human beings on an equal footing with men in a great many ways in which we do not put them at the present time". The Nazi and Fascist systems of Europe, as in many other aspects of human development, have retarded women's emancipation. 'Alas! The evil that men do lives after them'. Though these totalitarian regimes have been removed, their ideas are bound to linger on for some time and strenuous effort and much time will have to be expended to undo the mischief they had done in regard to the development of woman's personality. Even in Soviet Russia, there are in recent years disturbing signs regarding the role of woman in society. We are still far away, very far away, from the *nadir* of woman's complete humanization. As Mrs Strachey says, in her introduction to the symposium *Our Freedom and its Results*, "None of the writers say that we can yet judge what it all amounts to; none of them feel that the freedom of women in society is either really achieved or really stable or that there is any clear evidence as to what its results will be when that time comes".

Treatment accorded to woman since the earliest times.

In the great majority of uncivilized peoples woman's position was far inferior to that of man. Men had proprietary rights of ownership, enjoyment and disposal over women. Religion sometimes acted to modify the despicability of her subordination; but more often, religious faiths, superstition and the force of social custom acted still further to choke off woman's personality. Ibsen's thesis is that women are captives. His exposure of the dependent-child-



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The wife in *Nora Helmer* is something revolutionary. A fundamental truth, vital to the health of human civilization, has long been forgotten—that without the complete 'humanization' of woman no society can be truly creative. A study of woman's position in society since the primitive age reveals that all the world over it has been, in some form or other,

"The father gives the command ;
The mother joins and approves :
Then children all attentive stand,
And each, obedient, moves ".

Though traces of mother-right can still be discerned, the matriarchal family has been mostly pre-historic. The patriarchal family organisation has been almost the universal basis of all civilized races. The laws and conventions of the *Heroic Age* of the *Vedas* in ancient India ; the Contracts and other scrappy-but-historical evidence bearing on the codes and customs in Persia, Greece and Rome, of the Semitic, Slav and early Germanic tribes, and of Arabia in Mohammed's time ; the accepted rules of personal and social conduct amongst the Babylonians about 2200-1900 B. C. as handed down to us by the *Code of Hammurabi* ; the classical literature of the ancient Chinese—all bring out one fact that 'where civilization is beginning, the family, in some form or other, is already organized under the rule of the father'. The Indian family itself was based on a typical patriarchate. In the early Asiatic civilizations the lordship of the husband over every other member of the household was untrammelled and marriage was a semi-commercial transaction wherein the bride was either purchased for a price from her parents or guardians, or was given as a gift to please, without ascertaining her wishes ; sometimes she was taken away as a captive. The 'captive' form of marriage was the earliest, almost pre-historic ; the other two kinds of marriage persisted for a long time and are still widely prevalent in many lands, though in modified and varied forms. The



son also was equally at the disposal of the parents. His marriage could be fixed in utter disregard of his own likes and preferences. However, we have on the authority of no less a sociologist than Hobhouse that 'the wife had certain pecuniary guarantees against arbitrary divorce, while, if ill-treated, she might leave her husband' (*Morals in Evolution*, p. 181). In the later Babylonian era, the woman was relatively a free agent, invested with a certain legal personality; she was not denied the freedom to conduct business and commerce, to dispose of properties and to engage herself in other vocations. In the later years of independent Egyptian history, we learn from Herodotus and Sophecles, Egyptian women were remarkably independent. Polygamy was disallowed; kind treatment of the wife was enjoined on the husband; women were not debarred from even administrative and executive work; there were even ruling princesses governing their 'Queendoms'—queens like Nitocris, Sebek Ra, Nefert, Hatasu were independent rulers of their realms owing no allegiance to any external authority! Universally, we find that motherhood was held in esteem and, 'honour' to mother was an inviolable commandment. Though there was no real equality of the two sexes, in ancient Babylon as well as in Egypt and Assyria, the supreme importance of fertility was symbolized in the worship of Mother Goddess like *Ishtar* of Babilonia,—*Astarte*, *Phanicia* and *Isis* in Egypt. The concept of *patria potestas* was even more strongly developed in Chinese civilization. The husband was the supreme lord of the household and servilient obedience to man's will and abject surrender to man's whims was woman's privilege! Confucius, the greatest of Chinese philosophers, was himself prejudiced against women. "Women are human" said he, "but are lower than men. It is the law of nature that woman should not be allowed any will of her own". "Ignorance is the best ornament of woman" is an age-old Chinese say. The position of women has



deteriorated in China through the ages. Lord Acton's (political) dictum—'all power corrupts: absolute power corrupts absolutely'—is true of all unrestrained authority. Without effective checks and balances, authority is invariably abused. When men were given such supreme sway, they swanked like little Gods and kindness and sympathy towards women were dried up. Even evil was attributed to women. The Chinese prejudice against women is typified in the silly old adage 'disorder does not come from heaven—it is produced by the women'. In the Hebrew Laws, the position of women was despicable. Very few virtues were recognized in women and they were considered as depositories of sin and malice. 'Give me any wickedness except the wickedness of a woman' was the horrible theme of Ecclesiasticus. In *Medea* (Euripides) a Greek woman bewails,

"Surely, of creatures that have life and wit,

We women, are of all unhappiest".

Plato was more considerate to women. While stressing woman's duties rather than her rights, he emphasizes that 'as far as the State is concerned there is no difference between the natures of man and woman'. Aristotle best expresses the ancient Greek view when he lays down that a man should rule his slaves as a despot, his children as a king, his wife as a magistrate in a free State—but 'rule' he must! In the age of the ancient Romans, *patria potestas* was highly developed. The Roman tradition was impressed by the Spartan ideals of discipline and obedience, law and order. However, the Roman matron retained her status as 'her husband's companion, counsellor and friend'. In the days of Roman glory, while in social relationships and on the moral side man and woman were equal, legally woman was utterly subject to man. In the twilight years of Roman prestige, in the aristocracy men and women were almost equal: divorce was common: *patria potestas* decayed. The Roman family was through-



out monogomist. With the advance of individualism, gradually the Roman wife gained. "Family life gave her a dignity, a social importance, which the Greek wife soon lost when she was shut up in the women's apartments and left public life to the Courtesans" (J. Declareuil, *Rome, the Law-giver*, p. 106). According to the law of the Lower Empire, marriage could be effected only with the consent of the spouses. Parental consent ceased to be the all-determining factor but was properly a measure of protection. Similarly the 'lordship' of the husband over the wife was transformed into 'protection'. Fidelity became a reciprocal duty. But the law of divorce became more stringent for, under Catholic influence, indissolubility of marriage was becoming widely accepted as desirable. Justinian suppressed divorce by mutual consent though, later, Justin restored it. Relaxation of the traditional codes and the propagation of the Christian faith helped to promote equality of juridical capacity between the sexes. Referring to the growth of individualism among women and the consequent loosening of family bonds, Cicero himself remarked that the guardians had passed under the guardianship of the women! While it is true that 'morals' deteriorated in the last stages of Roman glory, particularly among the ladies of aristocratic society, it is probable that the picture presented to us is unduly blackened and one-sided. "It is true that a moral change was visible in the last centuries of the Republic; but the moralists and the historians, who are given to noting only what is abnormal, have gravely exaggerated it" (Ibid, p. 106). However, this development was confined to the rich only, who were a very small proportion of the population. While the Plebians themselves were, as a class, subordinate, the lot of the women amongst the Plebians was much worse. Class distinctions thus cut across the sex line in society so that the Patrician ladies enjoyed better privileges and social position than the men and women of the lower groups. However, even



in the highest class men were superior to women.

The Arabs scandalized women as 'the whips of Satan'. Though Mohammed, the Prophet, with great wisdom, admonished "ye men: ye have rights over your wives and your wives have rights over you" he could not effect substantial reforms. He had to compromise his idealism. According to Mohammed, free divorce was legal: sympathetic and just treatment of women-folk was enjoined on all men as their duty. It is significant that Islamic Law recognizes woman's rights to property and other attributes of women's individuality, though actually in Muslim society the lot of woman has not been better than in other communities. "In the Islamic system she occupies a far higher legal position than was accorded to her, even in England, until recent years, and a decidedly higher position than in many continental countries" (Ameer Ali Syed, *The Legal Position of Women in Islam*). The founder of Islam entertained very progressive views regarding the position of woman as daughter, wife, mother and individual in society. Later, Abu Hanifa (founder of the great *Hanifa* school of Mussalman Law), as early as in the eighth century of the Christian era, did not preclude woman even from the office of the *Kazi* or judge. Such a right to the exercise of judicial authority is yet to be conceded to woman in even the most advanced countries. Fatima, *Lady of Light*, the Prophet's beloved daughter, followed her father into open assemblies to preach and propagate Islamic faith: in *Kitab-ul-Aghani* high praise is showered on the tambourinist Obaidah who was held in esteem by famous musicians in the reign of the Caliphs Mamun and Mutasim: Fazal, the poetess, Shaikha Shudha, the scholar in history, Zainat Ummul-Muwayyid, the lady jurist of renown (1146-1237 A. D.) were some of the talented ladies in the Islamic world. The Prophet ordained: 'heaven is at the feet of the mother'—and the mother was placed on a high pedestal for the offspring to revere and emulate. The primitive Germanic tribes, like



the Chinese, treated woman as a perpetual ward under the dominating thumb of the man—of father, husband and son successively.

It is interesting to note that religions invariably give an honoured place to womanhood and ordain reverence to mother. Hinduism enshrines woman as the *Shakti* of *Siva* His Eternal Half; Islam identifies woman with the *Mystery of Being*; Christianity worships Virgin Mary symbolizing all womanhood. But in effect, whatever was the intention, these have served only to delude the woman into appreciating the shining and jingling of her fetters. For very long, religious practices, engulfed in prejudice, ignorance, and superstition, worked in the reverse way and promoted reaction. The influence of the Church in shaping modern European marriage system was to make the consent of the concerned parties the only necessary condition for a valid marriage. The conquest of the primitive as well as feudal traditions by the Church was gradual and painful. The *Canon Law*, however, does not permit divorce. Even in the later Middle Ages, in Europe, the subjection of woman persisted in its crudest forms. Though woman was redeemed from the position of a drudging slave, a mere chattel to be banded about without any volition on her part, at best her status was still as 'man's liege subject'—if that could be termed status! Then came the Reformers who defied the view of the 'Roman Church' that marriage was sacrosanct. Reformation sought to break up the Canonical view of marriage. Divorce-right was upheld by the enthusiasts of Reformation under Protestant Luther, among whom was the famous bard Milton himself. The wholesome influence of the Church or of Protestantism should not be over-rated. In fact the Christian view towards sex and woman is coloured by spurious puritanism. Christian ethics generally deplored the sexual instinct. Protestants, despite their Reformation theories, were actually as much shocked as Catholic St Paul himself at



adultery or fornication on the part of women. Christianity, unlike other religions, has shown a rather ambivalent attitude towards family life. Any lapse from sexual chastity was condemned by the 'moralists' as sin. This continual insistence on virtue was instrumental in degrading woman's place in society for it became the most plausible excuse for segregating and subjugating woman on the pretence of protecting her from sin; how else could her virtue be secured? A flattering unction indeed to man's vain soul! "Woman was represented as the door of hell: as the mother of all human ills.... She should be especially ashamed of her dress, for it is the most potent instrument of the demon. Physical beauty was indeed perpetually the theme of ecclesiastical denunciation..... Their essentially subordinate position was continually maintained". (W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, pp. 357-358.) And, as Bertrand Russel succinctly clinches, "Since the moralists were men, woman appeared as the temptress: if they had been women, man would have had this role" (*Marriage and Morals*, p. 52).

Not till the close of the 19th century did the position of woman really improve. A fundamental change from the past was consummated with the passing in England of the 'Married Women's Property Acts' of 1870 and 1882 giving the basis for the modern conception of personal rights. Militant feminism in Great Britain and other countries was the inevitable reaction to long subjection. The recent trends are towards guaranteeing equality of civil and social status, full legal protection, rights to property and its free dispensation. In divorce, the differentiation between man and woman has been nullified. Marriage has become more a contract and less of a sacrament. Either party has an independent legal personality. The idea of proprietary ownership has been replaced by the realization of individual dignity and mutual love. These developments have not reached the 'finale' in any country in actual practice nor



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is this unmistakable trend uniform in all lands. However this new philosophy is truly 'ethical' while the traditional one has been 'magical' and 'irrational'.

Recognition of Common Humanity.

'Woman, the measure of all things' would be a complementary and apt variation of Protagoras' humanistic doctrine. Woman's place in society is one of the reliable criteria for assessing social progress. It is possible to correlate emancipation of womanhood and human development.

'Social progress can be measured with precision by the social position of the female sex' (Karl Marx). To attain the best that woman is capable of in the harmonious development of her personality, to properly discharge her functions in society, 'to be herself,' as it is true of man, woman must be an independent and responsible agent; her individual talents and qualities must have fullest and unhampered scope; she must be free to shape her career and her life, and it is only through such free development that the degree and measure of differentiation in the 'natural' abilities of man and woman can be realized and gauged. Full responsibility, development of individual character and fulfilment of personality are inseparable. Whatever be the theoretical conceptions in ancient, medieval and modern civilizations, too long has the mere biological fact of sex blighted and seared woman's life in society. In actual life, personal and social, woman has been obliged to be a mere camp-follower under masculine *dictat*, so that women are newcomers to public life. Even today, in no part of the world are women yet equals of men. This 'Gods-made-the-world-for-us' arrogance of men still persists. Centuries-old prejudices die hard. In many instances woman herself, through ignorance or the sub-conscious inhibitions of upbringing or force of habit and custom, accepts a different and unequal status in life.

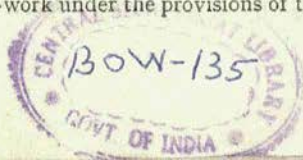
Since the closing years of the nineteenth century there



has been developing a new attitude of recognizing common humanity rather than the biological accident of sexual difference between man and woman. Among the philosophers and prophets of the French Revolution, Condorcet, Holbach, Holdberg were consistent advocates of the educational and citizenship equality of women. The French Revolution itself restored property and inheritance rights to daughters. Mary Astell, Catherine Macaulay, Condorcet and others assailed the educational, social and citizenship disabilities of women in contemporary European society. They demonstrated to a hesitant, superstition-and-tradition-ridden society and to a determined opposition that was actuated by self-interest and ignorant prejudice that it was urgent to remove the civil inequities and social injustices. It is the lesson of history that every righteous cause owes much, for its triumph, to a few crusading pioneers who, with uncommon moral integrity and courage, espouse and propagate it against all odds. Society, on any issue, can be roughly dichotomized into three camps—the few zealots on the one side proclaiming a new idea or faith to an incredulous or suspicious society, braving all inconveniences and sufferings; the majority of the members who hardly pause to ponder over the issues involved but are unconsciously ruled by the prevalent customs which have a long-but-none-too-hoary tradition bolstering them up; on the other side, there is fanatical and organized opposition from a small group who want to kill the new idealism in the shell itself. When this opposition group wilts and signs of its decay are clearly visible, the common multitude are swayed away from their apathy and hesitancy and are recruited to the new camp. In the movement for the emancipation of women, Mary Wollstonecraft was one such pioneering free spirit out to break away from the ignoble past. In 1792 was published her great book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. To sympathetic but timid women of that age her plea appeared no better than the desire of the



moth for the moon. Contemporary orthodox English society raised a quizzical eye-brow : first it was astonished and then it snarled. Many considered the writer indecent and even 'immoral'. It did not dawn on them that here was an iconoclast of false idols. She was an impetuous free-thinker who proclaimed that the shameful shackles yoking down woman—yes: all the chains—should be snapped. "The first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being regardless of the distinction of sex". She was thus the high-priestess of common humanity and, common humanity is inconceivable without woman's freedom. Theological orthodoxy felt scandalized and put up unpromising resistance to 'feminism'. John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women* (1869) was another crusading denunciation of the humiliations heaped on womanhood and was an earnest plea for the 'humanization of woman'. Among politicians, Disraeli himself favoured women's suffrage. Richard Cobden, David Hume, Jacob Bright and John Stuart Mill were all convinced believers in women's suffrage and they fought for extending the Parliamentary franchise to women. For the first time, in November 1918, the law was passed making women eligible for election to Parliament, while the Suffrage Movement in Great Britain came to an end only in 1928 with the recognition of complete political equality, in law, of women with men with the enactment of the Representation of the People Bill in the House of Commons by 387 votes cast in favour against a mere 10 votes; and this measure received Royal assent on 2 July 1928. Earlier in 1917, women's franchise had been extended (in part as a recognition of and concession in virtue of their war services), with a higher age limit of 30 years. During this war, again, it was a welcome sign of the change in social attitudes and also a recognition of the efficiency with which women were discharging their wartime duties when Mr Winston Churchill assured, referring to the conscription of women for war-work under the provisions of the National



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Service Act of December 1941, that all women so affected 'will have exactly the same rights and safeguards as men subject to compulsory military service'. In U. S. A., in August 1920, an amendment to the Constitution was effected prescribing—'the right of the citizens in the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the U. S. or by any State on account of sex'. The rigidity of the constitutional framework of U. S. A. held up the legal emancipation of women for a considerable time. The American Feminist movement began in 1847. In 1848 was held the first Women's Rights Convention. The National Woman's Party was formed in 1913. The Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment became law in 1920. It is interesting to note that, even as late as in 1911, the Liberal Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr Asquith, was a determined opponent of the 'Feminist' agitation for the political vote and other privileges.

It was the female industrial workers who, appalled at the inhuman treatment meted out to them and to juvenile labour in the mills and factories after the Industrial Revolution, fought for the rights of women and finally obtained full access to educational and other facilities and also secured the political franchise and the complementary attributes of citizenship. About the year 1850, in Great Britain, the period when Engels published his slashing indictment *Condition of the English Working Class*, the conditions of work in mines and factories were inhuman. It was a common sight to see "women working half-naked in the coal mines; young children dragging trucks all day in the foul atmosphere of the underground galleries; infants bound to the loom for fifteen hours in the heated air of the cotton mill and kept awake only by the overlooker's lash; hours of labour for all, old and young, man and woman, limited only by the utmost capabilities of physical endurance." It was this degrading and exhausting drudgery that drove women, at first in sheer desperate helplessness, to



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rebellion against such horrid conditions of work for themselves and their kids; then they claimed economic equality and 'human' treatment. In the years after the French Revolution (political) and the Industrial Revolution (economic) 'the street door that had bounded women' was smashed. Woman's interests were no longer exclusively 'personal'. Woman began to develop impersonal relationships with the larger circle of life around. Till then,

"She had lived, we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,
A quiet life which was not life at all
(But that, she had not lived enough to know)"

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Once the fruits of a fuller and freer life were tasted, they were too jealous in safeguarding their newly-attained freedom and extending its scope. Here was an economic cause that encouraged the women's movement in Great Britain. The growth of the ideas of political democracy was another potent influence. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, intellectual and organisational leaders maintained a consistent and determined campaign against the obvious economic and social injustices and absurdities. Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb and Graham Wallace initiated the Fabian essays in 1889.

Woman's inferiority feeling and the Chivalry complex of men.

A hundred subtle influences make the woman regard herself inferior and exclaim too often—'oh, I am only a woman!' In spite of their clamour for latchkeys and liberty, there has been always among women an inward feeling of a naturally inferior position. This, in part, explains the condescending social attitude towards the female and acts as a serious obstacle to the growth of women's employment. Says the Bhagavatgita 'one should uplift oneself' (*Uddharet atman atmanam*). True: it is a spiritual dictum. Its validity to the terrestrial problems and aspira-



tions is no less. (Woman's emancipation is finally in woman's hands. If woman's personality is to be vindicated, if human relationships should cease to be awry, if woman is to extricate herself from the mental prison she is in, woman should rid herself of such subconscious inhibitions and should regard herself not as a mere adjunct to someone else's desires and ideas,—a mere appendage to the apron-strings of the 'superior' male,—but as an independent person.) Woman's emotions and aspirations have so long been slobbered-over by men that a mute acceptance of her dependent status in society and resignation to her 'ordained' fate have overcome her. It must be noted however that, while it is true therefore that the core of personality is the person's own conception of self, this self-estimate itself is very largely a reflection of what the others think. "Status is a factor in the determination of one's conception of the self and this conception in turn is a determinant in the behaviour of the person". (J. H. S. Bossard and E. S. Boll, *Family Situations*, p. 64). Without independent economic means the vindication of personality would remain only academic and remote. But, provision of independent economic rights is only the first, no doubt essential, step. Society is something more than a mere economic hive and human beings are not merely mechanical factors of production and consumption. The rights to work, to free thought and expression of opinion and the other inalienable rights of human beings, the privileges of citizenship and active partnership in a common humanity, transcend in importance the need for economic independence. Nor should this be, as Olive Schreiner sums up in her admirable book *Woman and Labour*, merely a cry for rights but should also be a demand for positive opportunities. And, if adequate opportunities are to be available in reality, there should be provided all the necessary facilities for proper training and equipment. "There is no fruit in the garden of knowledge which it is not her own determination to eat."



It is essential that woman should overcome her own mental inertia. And, 'to be her own woman', as Charlotte Bronte put it, is a 'painful' process.

Throughout the nineteenth century women were toasted as 'the Ladies' and 'the Ladies' were over-obsessed with deceptive notions of modesty, propriety, gentleness and obedient, good behaviour. They were proud to be clinging vine.

For the Victorian, woman was a 'clinging reed', 'a milk-white lamb that bleats for man's protection' (Keats). Woman is neither a chattel deserving of only contemptuous condescension nor an 'uncrowned queen' quite away from the common working humanity. The chivalry complex of men is as wrong as the inferiority complex of women. Segregation is segregation, whether it is in the ivory tower or in the mud-hut. Women are not 'ministering angels' who should not soil their hands with the world's dirty work. 'Noble maternity', 'purity of women', 'gentleness and modesty' are some of the fool's-gold expressions of this chivalry complex. Superficially, they have a plausible sound. However, this attitude violates commonsense, pampers laziness and demoralizes womanhood. It is a spurious diadem which, in truth, forges fetters for women though it may embellish the metallic polish. In effect, it only serves man's selfish ends. The picturesque plumage of the peacock hides ugly feet. On the other hand, the real chivalry is that of equal, independent, mutually-respecting beings.

Bring the home into the outer world

It is often asked, if women are 'let loose' on the world—that is, if they are given votes; if they hold conferences, write newspaper articles and embroil themselves in the problems of the outer world; if they apply themselves to the study of all the arts and sciences; if they get elected to representative and responsible places; if they



begin to administer schools and other institutions; if they work in industrial and other employments; if they enter the different professions; if they engage themselves in diverse avocations outside of the home;—will not motherhood deteriorate? This smacks the unsavoury odour of the old theological concern for the virtue and chastity of woman. “Do shrimps make good mothers?” is the cynical and challenging question. A clencher, in reply, would be— is this world man's close preserve or is this really a human world? In fact, all these developments that emancipate woman raise motherhood to a rational and, therefore, to a nobler plane because then alone can the home really participate in the life of the nation and of the human community itself. The home is then brought into the actual criss-cross current of life. Segregation is, at best, escapist: active and full participation in the eddies of the outer world really stabilizes family life and promotes harmony. “Home is the empire, the throne of woman..... Here she reigns in the legitimate power of all her united charms.” It has been stated too often, almost as an inviolable law of nature. Its validity is not denied. But to make it a conclusive argument and justification for excluding woman from all non-home life, from all the activities, interests and problems of the larger world beyond the home, is arrant nonsense. In fact, this biological function of reproduction which is exclusively woman's may be made an argument for giving weighted consideration to woman in other walks of life. Childbirth involves much pain and risk to woman and ‘a whim of nature’ has allotted the whole of it to woman. In discussing the idea of just relationships between the sexes, the Russian writer Nemilov (1930), in his *The Biological Tragedy of Women*, points to this significant handicap of women and urges, “it is absolutely necessary to go beyond social equality and seek such patterns of life which might alleviate the tragedy of sex.” Of course to evaluate human relationships exclusively in



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terms of such pleasure-pain calculus is untenable. Woman has not only been caged : she has also been humiliated and scandalized. The Great Buddha himself says that secrecy, and not openness, belongs to woman. The Strindberg thesis is that women are devils : the Barrie thesis is that they are wistful : the Ethel M. Dell thesis is that they are all nurotic masochists yearning for the dominating hand of a master ! Rousseau himself who passionately bewailed 'man was born free but is everywhere in chains' could not visualize freedom and equality for women. "Girls" he wrote, "should be early subjected to restraint. This misfortune, if it is really one, is inseparable from sex"—as if woman was born in chains and should perpetually be in chains !

When biological, natural or traditional values are stressed to the eclipse of reason, enlightenment and logic, hero-worship is fostered and 'a world of hero-worshippers is a world in which women are doomed to subordination' for society takes care to see that the leader is masculine. Tradition that regards woman as a 'mystery' and man as 'an inscrutable power' is a relic of barbarism : in this scientific world it is an anachronism from a dead past. True, woman should be held in due esteem for her maternity : she should be equally, if not more, respected for her common humanity. Is man confined to fatherhood alone ? Exclusive stress on maternity and denial of other purposes in life for woman renders in family the place of the husband and the children primary and positive and that of the woman dependent and wholly ancillary. Child-bearing, though it is the biological and primordial function of woman, can never be the sole role of woman in civilized society. George Meredith, almost the last of the Victorian age in Great Britain, always presented in bold outline the inherent conflict between man's customary ascendancy and woman's claims to her own rights, her urge to pursue her ideals, and her aspiration for the possession of her own soul and, when



man seeks to impose his own will on woman, 'he is not merely playing the tyrant but is also playing the fool'. 'To be of any value—I must be myself'—let every woman proclaim it : this is not a mere expression of woman's egoism but is the most elementary necessity. 'Woman continues the creative work of God'. Motherhood has been and will continue to be the main channel for the creative energy of womankind. But cannot woman attain superior heights in other creative directions,—in arts, science, philosophy and literature? The lives and doings of a Sappho, a Marie Curie, a Catherine of Sienna, a Nightingale, are adequate testimony to put the final quietus on any doubts regarding genius in woman. Such women have no doubt been few. In fact, they have been far fewer than amongst men. Why? An important cause is that, for ages, the requisite education, training and freedom necessary to cultivate and develop the innate capacities of women have been denied to them : their creative intellectual work has therefore been stunted and the world is the poorer for that.

In primitive societies, with the ascendancy of *patria potestas*, the subjection of women stemmed from man's desire to secure woman's virtue. Men feared that the purity and genuineness of family descent might be compromised if women were not rigidly confined to the home. Such subjection of the female to the behests of the male was at first physical. Men found it very convenient and so women came to be precluded from mental avocations outside of the family and the biological function became the sole end of woman's existence. This mental enslavement of women reached its worst phase in the Victorian era. "Love as a relation between men and women was ruined by a desire to make sure of the legitimacy of the children. And not only love, but the whole contribution that women can make to civilization has been stunted for the same reason" (Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals*, p. 27). If a few freaks of



genius have shot forth, that has happened inspite of all these oppressive handicaps. How can the supreme authority of the father and the emotional satisfaction of the members of the family go together ? To the extent *patria potestas* was the basis of family structure, parental affection was not. In fact, it is only with the lessening of *patria potestas* that the real function of the family, the cultivation of mutual love for the promotion of individual personalities, is being intensified. As MacIver says, "In the patriarchal family the adjustment of the partners to one another was imposed, if not otherwise attained, by economic necessity and social pressure. Today the necessity and the pressure have loosened and the family, no longer strongly, if rudely, cemented by extraneous functions, has to surmount in its own strength the psychological tests of its cohension" (*Society—A text-book of Sociology*, p. 224). While obedience, even sexual gratification and the desire for offspring are being devalued, there is an 'avvaluation' of the idea of mutual love and respect so that each individual member of the family—father, mother and child—may be enabled to attain the best he or she is capable of. This conception of equalitarian companionship as the basis of marriage and family is recognized and realized, more than in any other country, in the U. S. S. R. and Sweden.

What if women are more emotional ?

It is often pointed out, with a touch of derision, as a weakness in women, that women are more emotional than men. Even if the proposition were true, why should this be considered a drawback or something to be reproached ? Or can it be, in any way, the *raison detre* of man's superiority and domination ? It is, on the other hand, a quality that ennobles woman. That may perhaps explain why women are more generally lovers of welfare, harmony and peace. To express the idea differently, while men think, women also feel. Feeling leads to positive action to remedy



the ills. The contempt for emotion is un-understandable because emotion is an expression of life itself... Are men unemotional? Why do nations then go to war and why do men hurl themselves against one another in a death-dance of destruction? Only, men's emotions seem to be less creative but more destructive. Woman's sentiments may be of a finer type. Emotions are natural instincts: it is futile and undesirable to attempt to eradicate them. Through self-restraint and enlightenment they can be tamed and raised to a higher plane to become truly purposive. Creative imagination, no less than reason itself, has been the basis of civilization. Emotion and creative genius are closely related. The contempt for emotion is nothing but preferring the burrowing mole to the singing lark. Men die 'with a blithe smile on their lips' in crusading causes and in destructive wars. This has been, in fact, 'one of the commonest occupations' of men. Is it not an emotional impetus that impels them forward toward Death?

Factors working for the emancipation of Woman

Ethical, political, economic forces have all been working to destroy the unjust and unequal relationship between man and woman in society. Psychological influences, sociological and other facts, political doctrines, historical developments, underline all ethical consciousness: they impinge on the evolutionary process and may help or hinder any particular development. While historical facts play an important role, the effects of contemporary social institutions and ideas are no less significant in modifying, restricting or accelerating the pace of social progress. And again, in every age, there are a few free spirits, freaks of genius, who rebel impetuously against all vestiges of unreason, dogma and bondage and who, by precept and more by living their own thoughts, set up unexpected currents in social evolution. Such persons inspire several other otherwise ordinary mortals and enlist them as crusaders in a



cause. The thought of mankind has always been ahead, far ahead, of human achievement. The 'prime mover' behind a great revolutionary ideal or change is rarely accidental. Often individual dreamers endowed with uncommon 'visual-mindedness' (sentimental, philosophical, artistic or emotional), which 'the world's cold thumb and finger fail to plumb', have initiated new trends of thought in humanity thus rendering possible greater achievements. As with Plato, in their 'magnificent dreams', for them their ideals themselves are fundamental realities. They keep tyrnt with visionary ideals which may never materialize in full. At the same time, they do not float in thin air. They tread on Mother Earth, lead the common humanity by the hand, directing its gaze towards a better way of life and nobler purposes of existence. With single-minded devotion 'they hew the line and let the chips fall where they may' for they have a living faith in the maxim 'from low beginnings we date our winnings.' These and other imponderable factors have all been at work, through the ages, to emancipate woman.

Woman is growing conscious of new values in life

The family cult—that is, the intimate, mutual relationship between husband and wife, parents and children—has been a strong social bond in the evolution of human civilization and has proved to be the nucleus of social growth. Some loss of independence for each individual member within the family is the price requisite for this. Untrammelled *potestas* of the father was the basis of Chinese, Greek, Roman, Indian and other ancient family life. Male superiority and female subjection are not necessary for the perpetuation of the family institution—they are, on the contrary, severe handicaps in the performance of its true functions and hobble the healthy development of human society. It is a canard to say that with the freedom of woman the family will become extinct. Never in human



History has the family, or for that matter any other human institution, been static. It is only inert matter that is not dynamic. A continual process of change is the expression of life itself, though the pace as well as direction of this dynamism vary from time to time, from country to country. Now marriage is considered to be successful only if the spouses mutually benefit and are happy. The mere legal registration of a wedlock, or even the bearing and rearing of children, living together and such other criteria are no longer conclusive. In the ultimate, beyond all material and objective facts, the content of happiness is psychological. With the transformation of economic life from the early simple pastoral pursuits into the mercantile and later into the complex modern industrial system, urban living has become very common: urban living is a highly individualistic type of living and the impact of social, economic and political happenings in the outside world on the family as a unit as well as on each individual member of the family is much more real and intense in our generation. Naturally, women also have been reacting to all the developments around them. And, with this educative experience, they have been 'discovering' more and more of their own selves. The mental attitudes of the newer and younger generations are themselves different from those of their parents and sires. It is not mere security nor the smug contentment of a leisured and ignorant life limited to a narrow circle that they covet. Woman, no less than man, is after new values and ideas, new purposes in life. A touch of adventure, the desire to trace a new course in life and the wish to be distinctive fan their imagination, kindle their aspirations and brighten their hopes. Modern inventions like electricity, radio, the automobile and the movie have played no mean part in bringing about a fundamental change in the outlook of the rising generations. It may seem rather strange to many but Bertrand Russell, with no disposition whatever towards levity but in all seriousness,



attributes the greater degree of social freedom and 'boy-and-girl-affairs' in America to prohibition and automobiles ! Ogburn is more convincing when he maintains that, while steam was an enemy of family life by driving women from their home-crafts into large factories, the new industrial power, electricity, has proved to be a blessing to family harmony by lightening domestic work and by bringing work nearer the home. The undue concentration and localization of industry led to many social ills. Decentralization of industrial production into small units is now possible through the use of electricity.

In this quick-changing pattern of social life, all conventions, traditional beliefs and even ideals change in their relative importance and some are discarded as no longer valid. What was accepted as axiomatic a few decades ago may now be thrown to the muck-heap as of no worth. In this kaleidoscopic and complex modern economic and social life wherein competitive ambition for distinction, power, fame, wealth and uniqueness holds supreme sway, who would not raise an amused eye-brow at seemingly platitudinous gibberish ? What Diderot calls 'the stirring of doubt' is the characteristic of a rationalist outlook. The 'wisdom' of the past is not accepted unless it is found suitable to the changed contemporary social frame-work. Appeal to tradition no longer carries conviction. This then is the psychological set-up that has been inducing more and more women to challenge, nonchalantly, conventional codes of conduct and strike out their own careers. Reason has thus played a vital part in breaking down woman's subjection : women's education has been much instrumental in furthering this. Social institutions, like economic institutions, must be continuously pruned, readapted and reformed in the light of the changes in human values, needs and perspective : otherwise, in sheer desperation, the disgruntled and the reformers would join together to throw them overboard.



The growing social functions of the State are a factor

The State organizations have been assuming an increasingly important and extensive share of the responsibilities that have devolved so long on individuals and families. In an increasing sector of economic and social life, the State is actively participating. In maternity and child welfare work, medical and health services, provision of educational facilities and employment opportunities, the State has been playing a leading role. This continually increasing interference of the State has lessened the economic functions that have been traditionally borne by the father. Also, the domestic work of house-wives has been made less burdensome and more pleasant and quicker to do. Women thus have now not only better opportunities but also more time at their disposal to do some 'non-home' work. Women take up vocational or professional work either to be economically independent or with a view to augmenting the family's total income resources: nor does society any longer look askance at this half as severely as before. In U.S.A., in 1940, there were nearly twelve million women at such work and the figure has swelled during the war years.

The effects of wartime experiences

In the war period in almost all countries, particularly in countries actually war-torn, women have been drafted into different categories of work and they have discharged their 'unfeminine' duties on farms, in industry, transport and public utility services, war plants and defence works, quite ably. If not doing work is lady-like, then there have been few ladies in war-time England and in the other war-scorched lands. Housewives and mothers, grannies and girls, have all been working even in civil defence and other essential and tiresome services. "This war" wrote Tom Harrison in *The Political Quarterly* (July-September 1942), 'is forcing women to notice more closely the wider implications of their environment, beyond the home, and the



corner shop and the town-centre. In one sense this war is a painful process of education in citizenship and the inter-relationships of near and distant events." Even in slumberous China there is a new awakening among women. "The fighting record of our women does not permit us to believe" writes Madame Sun Yat Sen, "that they will ever again allow themselves to be enslaved either by a national enemy or by social reaction at home" ('Chinese Women's Fight for Freedom'—*Asia*—August 1942). Can women be expected to forget all their war-time experiences and ordeals and achievements now that the war is over ? Will they suddenly 'flash-black' to their pre-war life ? Is such a sudden reversal to the 'normalcy' of 1938 possible in any sphere ? Then, how can we expect it in regard to women alone ? In Great Britain the problem has assumed such proportions as to necessitate the appointment of a Royal Commission to examine the question in its diverse aspects.

For the war-scorched countries of Europe and Asia, a season of anguish is at hand in economic and social readjustment and rehabilitation. After the last war Klaus Mann wrote—"A world war lies between us and our fathers, a sort of revolution. The Gods have torn us apart." During and after the last war, many of the moral trappings of the old era fell away. The war that has just ended has been a worse convulsion for the old ideas, old customs and standards of the inter-war period. It was one of the world's greatest social prophets who counselled "when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled.... These are the beginnings of the birth pangs" (Mark). War itself becomes a social institution and has far-reaching effects on society even after it is ended. The face of society itself is transformed in such ' twilight years ' of ferment and popular awakening. Such revolutionary periods generate many new influences in society. If the institutional veneers are not flexible and do not readjust themselves to the changes in mental outlook, in due course they may be altogether



scrapped. What exactly the New Morality will be it is difficult to 'crystal-gaze': but one thing is certain, it will be different. There is bound to be a swell of individual freedom: but if men and women are not to get intoxicated with it and if the new freedom is not to prove dangerous it is necessary that rights should be tempered by duties and that freedom be yoked to social restraint.



CHAPTER II

Marriage, Family and the Role of Women in Society.

Family is a primary social group

This enthusiastic upsurge for women's rights should not degenerate into anarchist channels challenging the very basic institutions of marriage and the family in social life. Though Bertrand Russell doubts if Patriarchal Family will continue to be important for any length of time in future and visualises the possibility of families consisting of mothers only with perfect equanimity, modern society will continue to be patrilineal (divested of patriarchal authority) : marriage and family will have to survive as an integral part of the civilized social structure for, love, children and work are the sources of fertilizing contact between the individual and the rest of the world. The family is the most important primary human group, the womb of the individual and of the State itself. The family is an institution fundamental to human progress—except, perhaps, in a state of anarchism : and, anarchism as a normal state of society is inconceivable. Immediately after the Communist revolution in Russia, sexual freedom in society was untrammelled. There was a dangerous confusion between woman's emancipation and break-up of the institution of family itself. It was Launa Charsky, for many years Soviet Commissar for Education, who declared "women will be entirely emancipated.... Our problem is now to do away with the household and to free women from the care of children...."



There is no doubt that the terms 'my parents', 'our children', will gradually fall out of usage, being replaced by the conceptions of 'old people', 'adults', 'children', etc.". Realities have forced this initial communist ideological outburst to retreat towards a better understanding of the real values of the parent-offspring relationship and there is now a definite bias in favour of family stability even in U. S. S. R. It should be realized, therefore, that marriage is neither a religious sacrament nor a mere prosaic contract in the market place. If the family is to serve its true function in the social framework it must be based on the bedrock of willing and enlightened cooperation and mutual respect amongst the members thereof and not on an irrational servilliance of the female or of the young.

The functions of the family

"There are in general two sorts of forces, one personal and one institutional, which hold people together in wedlock. By the personal I mean those which spring more directly from natural impulses and may be roughly summed up as affection and common interest in children. The institutional are those that come more from the larger organization of society, such as economic interdependence of husband and wife, or the state of public sentiment, tradition and law" (C. H. Cooley, *Social Organization*, p. 365). Many sociologists have attempted to enumerate family functions and to assess their relative importance. Ogburn, for instance, draws a six-fold pattern—affectional, economic, recreational, religious, educational and protective. Race perpetuation, socialization, regulation of sex and economic activity are listed together by Reed. The dichotomy into biological, economic, emotional, cultural functions is Mowrer's. Nimkoff's variation is—social, marital, and filial (a detailed discussion of these three broad categories is given in his *Family*, Ch. ii). Dr. Bernard mentions these functions as pertaining to the family in its role as a



✓ 'primary group'—the reproduction of legitimate offspring, protection of the offspring, socialization of these offspring, furnishing of affection and emotional security to family members. 'As an institution or complex of institutions,' the family is charged with regulating the relationship between the sexes, between parents and offspring, among siblings and other relationships embraced within the family (Jessie Bernard, *American Family Behaviour*, p. 26). Groves refers to protection and care of the young, regulation of sex, conservation of culture and provision of intimate contacts. A common denominator can be seen underlying these various types of classification. Broadly it may be stated, therefore, that the institution of family is governed by three forces—the satisfaction of the sexual urge, procreation of children, companionship and understanding between the spouses. Of these, religion has invariably stressed, almost to the exclusion of others, the continuation of the human species as the basic function of marriage and family life. Since earliest times, from the proverbial Adam-and-Eve days, the sexual impulse has been a primary influence. While religion, in the East as well as in the West, has always sought to imprint on the human mind the profound conviction of the importance and dignity of chastity, 'puritanism' has always been obsessed with sexophobia. Catholic St. Paul in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians* condemns fornication as a 'deadly sin' and prescribes marriage itself, 'by permission and not of commandment,' as a regrettable concession to human weakness, so that adultery and fornication may be prevented. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband." Significantly enough, he chooses to be oblivious of the biological function of marriage and family life. Marriage only to prevent sin—what an ideal to set before humanity! The whole system of Christian ethics, Catholic as well as Protestant, is based on the trite



dictum 'it is better to marry than to burn' which implies a belief in the impurity of sex urge itself. St. Paul's is a noxious view of asceticism which prompts him to deprecate the sex instinct itself. Howevermuch 'moralists' may deplore the development, in recent times, the sexual impulse has become more and more important in extra-marital relations and is losing its prime or motivating importance, particularly in western countries, as the sustaining force for the institution of the family.

The desire for children is now perhaps the least important and, in the more enlightened groups in the community, thinking men and women are now actuated by economic and other considerations in limiting the family size. It is not just accidental that wherever the 'totalitarian' infection spread, as in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Shintoist Japan, there was a State drive for larger families and greater numbers. And now in Soviet Russia too! One fails to understand why 'the brotherhood of the international proletariat' requires for its realization or furtherance more impressive population figures. It is only aggressive State nationalism that clamours for superior numbers. In uncivilized pastoral communities wives and offspring were desired for the labour they provided and for the other economic advantages that accrued in their wake. The very idea seems preposterous now. Parents desire children because, otherwise, there is left an important gap in family happiness. As for children themselves, without a strong family bond, their instinctive and emotional nature becomes lop-sided. The disintegration and liquidation of the family cannot be contemplated with any equanimity. A child that is deprived of the normal 'family gang' environment in its formative years is very much handicapped in life. Parents are almost universally fond of their sons and daughters. The State, on the other hand, takes a live interest in accelerating the rate of population growth because children provide the raw material for political machinations and



canon fodder for militarist schemes. And this drive for population increase has become competitive ! The perverted ideology of the modern nationalist State can hardly sink lower.

Co-operative partnership is the true basis

Be that as it may, it must be realized that the future of the institution of family depends not so much on sex gratification or the desire for children as on the adequacy or otherwise of the facilities available for community of living and thought between husband and wife and it is this urge for mutual companionship that is playing an increasing part in bringing together men and women into families. It is only when man and woman 'tone' into each other that there is happiness in a family. The most important explanation for divorce lies in a lack of this companionship. Though proof of adultery is legally necessary for granting a divorce decree, adultery has been proved to be not a major cause of divorce. Marriage refers to mating by public social sanction and subject to systematic social control. As such, marriage is a human institution and is unknown in the non-human animate world : because reason is the distinguishing attitude of the *Homo Sapiens*. Offspring are the biological consequence of mating. Nimkoff distinguishes between mating and marriage and both from the family. But his thesis that without children a family is inconceivable is no truism that cannot be called into question. 'A childless family' is a fallacy of nomenclature, in his view. A married couple, living together happily for a number of years, he denies them the family status. Obviously the moment a child arrives in the household, even if it be through adoption, the family comes into being. Such a rigid limitation of the family seems to be rather untenable, particularly in view of developments in contemporary society. It is a different thing to argue that through offspring the family is stabilized and that a sterile marriage



is more liable to dissolution. If mating, marriage and offspring are the three fundamentals of the family, inspite of the real and very common presence of each one of these three elements, how is it that the family as a social institution is decaying, particularly in the western countries? Obviously, there must be some other element that is absent in a large measure and which is equally essential to the institution of the family, for no secondary or tertiary factor can be potent enough to be destructive of an institution that is bolstered up by three such primary motives. Without the solemnization of marriage and the institution of the family the sexual-impulse can be gratified and there can be procreation of children also. What distinguishes the family therefore is the bond of common interest and understanding between the husband and the wife and between the parents and the children. Through living together for some time in intimate contact they develop mutual respect, affection and a feeling of oneness. As Westermarck points out '.....apart from the purely sexual instinct, conjugal affection may keep man and wife together even after their marriage has fulfilled its original aim (the act of propagation). And conjugal affection has certainly become more durable in proportion as love has been influenced by mental qualities' (*A Short History of Marriage*, p. 299). The family is now under a dark cloud. If it is to be securely placed on a firm basis as an institution beneficial and indispensable to human society, the idea must become general that the family is an 'adventure' in active cooperation and not in possession, in emotional understanding and sympathy and not in emotional exploitation.

Divorce and Marriage

Roman Catholic opinion holds marriage indissoluble. But is the Christian Gospel so clear in its denunciation of divorce? As Dr. Inge, the late Dean of St. Paul's, testified before the 1909 Royal Commission on Divorce, " the doc-



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line that marriage is absolutely indissoluble cannot, in my opinion, be proved from the New Testament." The Hindu Code denies the right of divorce. To deny a way of escape from impossible, frustrated and unhappy marriages equally for the woman, as for man, is irrational : for such denial would imply a negation of the fundamental truth that marriage is a social institution devised for the happiness of men and women and would render the woman a mere tool for the purposes of the institution itself. Before Christian influence imposed a more rigid view of marriage, a very free divorce code was prevalent in early Roman history and, even till the sixth century of the Christian era divorce by mutual consent persisted in Roman society substantially unaffected. Against the growing interference of the official Church in affairs of matrimony, Emperor Justin 'yielded to the prayers of his unhappy subjects, and restored the liberty of divorce by mutual consent' (Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*). But, ere long, Ecclesiastical Law asserted itself over Civil Law in the domain of marriage and, in the eighth century, Emperor Leo repealed Justin's legislation. From that time only Ecclesiastical—that is, indissoluble—marriages became legitimate and the idea of divorce was all but repudiated. Since 1100 A. D. Gratian and the other Canonists and Divines made a 'mess' of the law of marriage. They swore by eternal fidelity—'whom God hath joined, man shall not put asunder'—forgetting that, at times, man joins those whom God intends to be separate !

Protestantism was a rebellion against some of the 'whims' of 'Romish' Catholicism. However, in Great Britain, for a very long time even the embracing of Protestantism did not dispel the social prejudice against divorce. In his famous treatise, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton, in the seventeenth century, had to deplore the rigidity of contemporary marriage laws—"what thing more instituted to the solace and delight of man than



marriage? And yet the misinterpreting of some Scripture...has changed the blessing of matrimony not seldom into a familiar and cohabiting mischief...without refuge or redemption. So ungoverned and so wild a race does superstition run us, from one extreme of abused liberty to the other of unmerciful restraint." More, Milton, Seldon, Grotius and Leyser vehemently controverted the Ecclesiastical standpoint. Pufendorf, Montesquieu, Pothier and Voltaire continued the fight for freer divorce laws in the eighteenth century on the continent. One may recall to mind Seldon's bald but compelling statement: "of all actions of a man's life his marriage does least concern other people: yet, of all actions of our life, it is most meddled with by other people." In Germany the influence of Voltaire, that arch-breaker of idols, was felt and Frederick the Great liberalized the Law of Divorce. Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden quickly ignored the Ecclesiastical injunctions. But in Great Britain individual social reformers like Milton and agitators like Romilly failed to effect a substantial alteration of marriage laws till the Utilitarians and the Feminists joined forces in a determined drive to 'easy' the conditions of divorce. For the first time divorce was placed within the reach of the masses of the people in England with the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857: it was much extended in 1923.

To conclude from the increasing divorce rate that marriage has become bankrupt reveals little erudition and much prejudiced assumption. Nor is it true to argue, on the basis of the growing sexual relations outside of the family, that the family has become obsolete in fact and continues a hobbled existence only 'as a genuflection to convention, and a convenience to escape social embarrassments and stigma' (V. F. Calverton, *Bankruptcy of Marriage*, p. 121). On the other hand, Westermarck maintains, in refutation of this view, that divorce, far from being the enemy of marriage and family, is the saviour of marriage



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for, he rightly observes, 'however painful it may be, it is after all the remedy for a misfortune and a means of preserving the dignity of marriage by putting an end to unions that are a disgrace to its name' (Westermarck, *Future of Marriage in Western Civilization*, p. 152). When matrimony becomes empty husk, is not divorce the only way out in order to make real the concept of marriage as a social institution based on an exalted emotional urge? True, even in such instances, divorce may be a dreary prospect to contemplate : but it is an inescapable necessity.

Will the family be liquidated ?

The 'most essential thesis' of Westermarck is that "if there will be a time when conjugal and parental sentiments have vanished, I think that nothing in the world can save marriage and the family from destruction." Parental sentiment is not likely to be in future so decisive as it has been throughout the ages. It is uncertain if the parental feeling is a natural instinct. "The pre-maternal drive....has apparently no psychological basis, cannot be demonstrated in animals below man, and its distinction among human societies appears to be determined by the economic and social motives operative in the community. The same is true for the attitudes of the father. In any case, whether they have a psychological basis or not, the functioning of these motives is clearly influenced by cultural patterning and conditioning" (Otto Klineberg, *Social Psychology*, p. 78). As for the conjugal sentiment, it is relevant to the married or family state itself and not before and, as such, is the consequence and not cause. This conjugal sentiment itself is fostered and developed by other factors like sex impulse, desire for one's own offspring on whom parental affection can be bestowed, and the craving for mutual companionship of the sexes. As has been already stressed, the last is becoming the vital influence impinging on the family. If society fails to take due cognizance of



This new trend and does not provide adequate opportunities for the promotion of mutual understanding between the spouses, it is not improbable that family as a social institution may wither away. Community of life between husband and wife may itself be the source of friction and unhappiness unless mutual understanding exists. And if such mutual understanding between the spouses is to grow, it is only possible if each takes an intelligent interest in the aptitudes and work of the partner. This can be effected only through work, recreational and cultural pursuits, intellectual similarity and other common grounds. 'The family', Dr. James Plant says, 'must be considered in terms of what it means or provides to the individuals within it' (*Personality and the Cultural Pattern* p. 160) and what it does mean and provide is not the series of disintegrated factors but the whole of the family milieu (Bossard and Boll, *Family Situations*, p. 102). The family as a unit of interacting personalities—'each with a history' (E. W. Burgess as amended by John Dollard) is the modern sociological approach to the concept of the family and its problems. While the origin and evolution of the family from its most primitive forms is a very interesting study, while an appraisal of the vicissitudes to which the family, as a social institution, has been subject in response to the changing economic and social environmental set-up is helpful in understanding present-day problems confronting marriage and family, it is the promotion of the personality of each individual member in the parental family, the avoidance of family disorganization and the control of fissiparous tendencies that is of vital urgency. Family disorganization mainly arises from maladjustment in marriage which results in unhappiness for the mates. This explains the preoccupation of psycho-analysts with the content of happiness. To understand what is and what ought to be the place of 'the family gang' in the social framework and what should be the conditions and relations obtaining within a family if it



is to have the real 'gang' atmosphere, we need to undertake excursions into history, psychology and physiology and even into the juvenile and divorce courts: we need to realize that the expressions 'repression', 'complexes', 'frustration' are not merely the ornamental embellishments of modern psychology but have a real content with intimate bearing on present-day family life and its future. But happiness itself is the least definable of all and varies with the generally prevalent social values. The manner of adjustment between the husband and the wife differs according to the basic demands made on marriage and family life—whether 'fertility' is accorded weighted premium or whether greater stress is laid on the institutional functions of the family in the promotion of human personality. What is required is 'education for family life', a type of education that is realistically related to individual urges and social needs and is directly useful as a preparation for adult life. Even in U. S. A., as a recent authoritative study reveals, "probably the most important conclusion is that educators as well as their parents had almost completely ignored the evident need of women to have preparation for the certain inevitabilities of life." The manner in which individual personality is moulded through the family depends on the values chosen in a society. 'The Family as the threshold of Democracy' was the title for a discussion in U. S. A. at the 1940 White House Conference on Children in a Democracy. On the other hand, the Nazis held that 'the sickening cry for women's emancipation and independence' contributed to the effeminacy of German legislation under the Weimar Republic. Let us, every one of us, have a candid inward peep. When women demand equal opportunities and responsibilities, why do we 'gang up', openly or covertly, against such 'revolutionary' changes in the existing pattern of society? The more tactful among us disguise this opposition in the garb of intellectual honesty and reason. But, whether we admit it or not, pride, sense of power and



prestige, and the possessive instinct impel us into opposition. This opposition is sheer senile stupidity and arises out of a distorted sense of values.

Woman under the Fascist code

The progress of the movement for woman's emancipation and freedom has been neither uniform nor uninterrupted. The world moves monotonously between progress and reaction and forces of growth and decay always work side by side. In every cause there are certain definite periods of setback. The entrenchment of Fascism in Italy and the Hitler regime in Germany retarded the progress of European and world civilization. In fact, today, after the Nazi blight has been rooted out, the legacy of war seems to be so stinky as to threaten the survival of western culture. Under the Nazi regime of totalitarian dictatorship, as every other aspect of life was rendered subservient to the demands of the impersonal 'Total State' and the Race Myth, just as the individual citizen's independent personality was not recognized apart from the all-enveloping will of the State, so the rearing of children for the glorification of the State and for the perpetuation of the pure Aryan Germanic Race was made the exclusive function of women in Germany. "Marriage must not exhaust itself in the idea of comradeship: it must be more a unity from the midst of which new life emerges-the child-that is called upon to continue the noble line of ancestors of German blood." Under the National Socialist code, 'marriage and motherhood' was the goal of every woman. The wife and the mother were discouraged from all professional and other non-home interests and were to be confined to a private life within the family. The Nazis saddled on themselves the mission of bowdlerizing the German Race and, to subserve their Race Myth, hierarchical organization of the State and 'leader' principle, they flashed back to the discarded medieval cant about woman's subordination and her 'appointed' role....Fascist States



have done their best to order women back into domesticity and subservience and have reversed the historic fact of liberation and equality. They have in the course of this policy... tried to push into the background the liberating influence of Reason, and to do so they have glorified an ideal of woman that might be labelled as provincial, lower middle class, and even pre-industrial. She is fit and eager to bear children year in and year out, to cook and clean for them, but is not to aspire to educate, to guide, to discuss with them, to be their mental equal." (Charlotte Luetkens, *Women and a New Society*, p. 106)

The fallacy of Race has proved to be 'man's most dangerous myth': for the recognition of a ruling race based on supposedly superior culture is the logical extension of any rigid race differentiation. Peace can never be real or lasting unless it is founded on a common conviction in the solidarity of all humankind born out of the recognition of the organic and mental equality of all peoples. As Ernest Renan wisely remarks: 'Ethnic facts, though they constitute the main problem in the early stages of history gradually lose their momentum in proportion to the progress of civilization.' The Race Myth was not an original innovation of the Nazis: it was already in existence before they came to power and they found it a handy tool for their political machinations. The arrogance of race superiority has long been an Anglo-Saxon trait. Rudyard Kipling equated Freedom and England in his couplet:

What stands if Freedom fail?

Who dies if England live?

The Nazis made 'race' their ideological basis. Dr. Lothar Tirala, a leading exponent of the Nazi 'race science' said, "the voice of blood and race operate down to the last refinements of thought and exercises a decisive influence on the direction of thought." The arch Nazi distorter of truth, miscalled 'philosopher'—why? the Devil alone knows,—



Alfred Rosenberg laid down the Nazi laws of heredity when he theorized: "A Nation is constituted by the predominance of a definite character formed by its blood, also by language, geographical environment and the sense of a united political destiny. These last constituents are not, however, definite: the decisive element in a nation is blood." This is merely an adaptation from the racial doctrines of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when transmission of hereditary traits was believed to be through blood and when biologists and scientists were yet unaware of 'genes.' Modern science has conclusively disproved this 'blood' theory and has established that it is the 'genes' in the Chromosomes of the germ cells (spermatozoa in males and the ova of the females) that are the transmitters of features or qualities to the offspring. As such, the race ideology based on blood relationship may be anything—it is not scientific. The 'Nordic race' myth is an engineered offshoot of the 'Aryan fallacy.' It may be epitomized thus: just as family members are kins, nationalities have a common blood tie: the Nordic blood connection is the supreme of all bestowing qualities of initiative, leadership and inventive genius: the purity of the Aryan Nordic stock must therefore be preserved. This 'master-race' mysticism has been draped in pseudo-scientific robes. The scientific approach lies in an appeal to facts and, 'facts are sacred, comment is free.' Facts prove that any clear dichotomy of humanity into distinct races such as superior and inferior population groups is anything but scientific. "The violent racialism to be found in Europe today is a symptom of Europe's exaggerated nationalism. The cure for the racial mythology, with its accompanying self-exaltation and persecution which now besets Europe, is a reorientation of the nationalist ideal. Science and scientific spirit are in duty bound to point out the biological realities of the ethnic situation and to refuse to lend sanction to the racial absurdities and the racial



horrors perpetrated in the name of science. Racism is a myth and a dangerous myth" (Julian Huxley, Carr-Saunders and A. C. Haddon, *We Europeans*). Of course in any positive population policy, eugenic considerations are important. But *eugenics* is entirely different from *racism*. The term *eugenics* (eu=good, gen=race or stock) was first used by Sir Francis Galton to mean 'the science that deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of the race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage'. Eugenics, it must be noted, has nothing to do with the 'Iron Law of Nature' propounded by Nazi race maniacs nor has eugenic hygiene any similarity to the dogma that race superiority and purity must be maintained. Dr. G. M. Morant, Britain's foremost physical anthropologist living, in his address to the Royal Anthropological Institute at its centenary meeting, put the final *quietus* on race differentiation when he observed, "The idea that a race is a group of people separated from all others on account of the distinctive ancestry of its members is implied whenever a race label is used—but, in fact, we have no knowledge of the existence of such population today or in any past time" ('The Future of Physical Anthropology'—*Man*—XLIV-1944, p. 17). Similar authoritative, scientific evidence can be easily culled from different sources to knock the bottom out of the doctrines of race superiority. As Eric Mahler observes, "Historical evidence proves beyond doubt that the exact opposite of what the so-called race theory pretends is true. Any decisive advance in human evolution has been accomplished not by breeds that are pure either mentally or physically, not by any cultural inbreeding, but by an inter-mixture, by mutual impregnation of different stocks and cultures" (*Man, the Measure*, p. 30). Something seems to be basically wrong with the German mind. A young German philosopher, long before World War I—to be exact, in 1908—in a treatise, *Sex and Character*, stated, "There is no real dignity in women..... Gentle-



manliness does not exist among Jews. Women and Jews have no intrinsic standards of value (and have) nothing in their souls by which to judge the worthiness of any particular object." It is hardly necessary to point out to the close parallelism between these hideous ideas and distorted philosophies that later permeated the Nazi Movement. The Aryan man has, on the other hand a 'transcendental standard' and only Aryan men (neither non-Aryans nor women) can share 'higher metaphysical life.'

'Virtue' was sought to be vigorously enforced in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany by the State from above, presumably because 'immorality' was the exclusive prerogative of the State! Even unmarried girls were to be permitted to enter only occupations considered 'natural' to woman. Traditionally certain emotions, feelings and qualities are attributed as 'native' to women—and, invariably, it is men that have addressed themselves to such a dichotomy between the instinctive attributes of man and woman. Under the totalitarian systems of government, it was women's proud privilege to be 'bearers of fighters and labourers'! Is it not presumptuous to seek to prescribe rigidly the 'nature' of woman and what she should and should not be allowed to do? As John Stuart Mill long back argued; "One thing we may be certain of—that what is contrary to women's nature to do, they will never be made to do by simply giving their nature free play. The anxiety of mankind to interfere in behalf of nature, for fear lest nature should not succeed in effecting its purpose, is an altogether unnecessary solicitude. What women by nature cannot do, it is quite superfluous to forbid them from doing." The Fascists thought otherwise! In fact, the ideas of individual freedom and choice were the worst anathema to them. The Fascist system of government was based primarily on the oscification of personal rights and the suppression of free thought. In the words of Dr. Frick, one-time Nazi



Minister of Internal Affairs: "The mother should be able to devote herself entirely to her children and the family: and the wife to her husband: and the unmarried girl shall only be allowed in those occupations which correspond to the female nature. For the rest, of course, all occupations shall be the preserve of the husband." There was thus a nauseating and dangerous backward glance in the Nazi conception of family life and woman's place in the social framework. This 'kitchen-maid culture' of Nazi Aryanism was of course quite consistent with their recurring themes of *Blut, Boden and Volk* (Race, Land and People). The National Socialist literature is typified by rebellion—rebellion not against tradition and convention but against the forward outlook, against individualism, against intellectualism, against reason itself. However, though the Nazis perverted it to serve their own evil ends, one thing should be stressed: the family is not a mere mechanical relationship but a vital organic unit; the woman is not just a cog in the social machine but is the nerve centre, the heart, of the family organism. But if this ideal is to be attained, freedom of woman is the essential pre-requisite. While the tendency in U. S. A. (the land of the 'Dollar Princesses'!) and other Western countries has been lately to think over—much in terms of distinct, almost mechanical, human particles with no bonds connecting them with the past and segregated from one another by individualistic attitudes, in the totalitarian systems the stress on organic wholes has been overdone, dangerously overdone. Unless truth is muzzled, totalitarianism is doomed. *Leher-freiheit*, the right to pursue truth with single-minded devotion to objectivity, untrammelled by any ulterior considerations, was claimed by the German universities in the nineteenth century. In fact, "in the wonderful adventure of the human spirit, the universities of Germany took and almost maintained the lead" (*Religion, Science and Society in the Modern World*, Lindsay, p. 39)



"Learning dawned, its light arose,
Thus the Truth assailed its foes."

(Mendelssohn at Leipzig, in 1840)

"yet in the very country where the freedom of scientific thought had been so triumphant, the German universities made almost no resistance to the forces that attacked that ideal ... (and) Germany gave up one of her greatest glories with hardly a protest" (Ibid, p. 39). Universities were soon converted into partisan voices of the German nation: they ceased their search for scientific truth and became subservient to whosoever happened to be in political power: education became a medium of propaganda for the governmental authority: learning was prostituted to subserve despicable political ends: German professors began to 'heil' the 'kitchen-maids-culture': German scientists were groomed and harnessed to destructive purposes. The ideal Nazi woman, according to a pronouncement by Feder in 1926, was to be 'maid and servant.' According to the Nazi women leader Diehl Guida, woman was to rule by service and be 'a servant, queen and mother.' In the Fascist scheme, there was always an under-current thought that woman's domain was strictly confined to the tiny world of the family. "The man upholds the nation while the woman upholds the family" was their text. 'Reproduction,' 'womanly work,' 'the home' constituted the three-planked platform of the Fascists for their women. However, it may be observed that the actual position of women in Germany or Italy could not be regimented exactly on this ideological pattern: it altered with the economic rhythms. The Nazi theory was to some extent defeated by the economic forces of capitalism and the demands of militarist preparation. It was found impossible to rigidly confine women to the triple interests of *kinder, kuche, kirche*. For instance in 1936, thirty-one per cent of the employed Germans were women, which was a higher proportion than



in Great Britain or in France or even in U.S.A. Economic realities defeated Nazi ideology but the ideology itself was stinking.

Woman in Soviet Russia

And now, to U. S. S. R. and its women. The heritage of the common masses of Russian women was one of degradation and suppression. However, in the 'ritzy' Moscovite aristocracy, many women indulged in an orgy of extravagance and sexual licence. On the other hand, long before the eclipse of Czarist Russia, there were other women who had taken active part in social and political revolutionary movements. Finally, under Lenin's inspiring leadership, the agonized Russian workers and peasants rose in revolt against Czarism and all the evils it symbolized : then ensued 'the ten days that shook the world.' Czarism was overtaken by the nemesis of its own creation and the Communist U. S. S. R. was established. As our own India today and the Colonies of the British, French and Dutch Empires, in 1917 Russia was rich in natural resources and was densely populated but woefully lacked skilled labour, technological development and the State itself was apathetic to the economic progress of the common men and women. In 1932, Stalin urged, "we are hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us." The magnitude and the character of the change can best be realized if we recollect that the U. S. S. R. first appeared on the world's map in 1917, that till 1923 the U. S. S. R. was met by open hostility from all other leading countries of the world and today, with the U. S. A. and Great Britain, she stands supreme as one of the three leading industrial and military powers of the world. True, there have been grave lapses : but, before judging the U. S. S. R. on that score, should we not bear in mind that the tempo of their change has been terrific, that since 1917 they have had to be in



great hurry, that the U. S. S. R. has been trying to cram into one generation political, economic and cultural changes and growth that Great Britain had taken over two hundred years to accomplish and U. S. A. over a century? Since 1917, the State in U. S. S. R. has been a great 'liberating agent,' a 'hinderer of hindrances' to social well-being. Their conception of freedom is essentially economic, that is, freedom from want. Through grim work and sacrifice they have attained that end more than the others. The colour bar is entirely absent in the U. S. S. R. They have admirably solved the problem of the minorities. It was an Irishman, Dr. E. J. Dillon, who wrote as early as in 1929, "their way of dealing with home rule and the nationalities is a masterpiece of ingenuity and elegance. None of the able statesman of today in other lands has attempted to vie with them in their methods for satisfying the claims of minorities." What is most important of all, the common people, men as well as women, have a sense of continuous participation in public administration through social work.

In the last three decades, Russia has been catapulted from medievalism to the twentieth century at an unprecedented speed and the radical transformation in the status of women is one of the remarkable achievements to the credit of the Soviet Administration. Lenin declared: 'No nation can be free when half the population is enslaved in the kitchen.' Article 122 of the New Constitution reads: 'Women in U. S. S. R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. The exercise of these rights by women is ensured by affording women equally with men the right to work, payment for work, rest, and leisure, social insurance, and education and by State protection of the interests of mother and child.' Article 137 reads: "Women have the right to elect and be elected on equal terms with men." More than two-thirds of the able-bodied women of working age are employed outside of the home on a salary or wage



nessed them in the U. S. S. R. There are about two hundred delegates in the Supreme Soviet—the apex body in the governmental hierarchy. In 1937-38, taking the national economy as a whole, over 35 per cent of the total number of workers were females, with public health services and education topping the list of occupations, with about 75 and 60 per cent respectively. Nearly 45 per cent of the students in the higher educational institutions were women. The State care for the mother and the child surpasses that in any other country in the world. Prior to the war, over three hundred thousand mothers received direct State aid and, what is more significant, in the six years between 1935 and 1941 State expenditure on maternity and child-welfare services more than doubled. As early as in 1935, according to an estimate by Kingsbury and Fairchild of U.S.A., ninety-eight per cent of Moscow babies were born in hospitals. While in 1917-18 two-thirds of the entire population were illiterate, in 1939 hardly fifteen per cent were illiterate. Classified according to sex, before the Revolution, in 1917, while 50 per cent of the males and only 12 per cent of the females were literate, at the end of 1938 the respective percentages were 87 and 68. The overall achievement of the U. S. S. R. regime is that unnatural cultural differentials have been largely obliterated. Male and female sections, town-folk and rural inhabitants, industrial and agricultural populations, are converging. "The Revolution has been particularly beneficial to the peasants and to the women—most of all to the womenfolk of the countryside" (Steinberg, 'Education and Culture', *Our Soviet Ally*—a symposium, p. 170). This is a revealing eye-opener for the representative national government in India and to the Indian social reformer, for our inheritance from the past, the oppressive magnitude of our present-day economic and social problems in regard to the rural womanfolk, are similar.

Totalitarianism and Woman's Purpose

Women, more than men, in the Totalitarian States are



not required to have brains. Women are by nature individualists and individualism is the enemy of the Total State. With all their advantages and privileges, women in U.S.S.R. too, as in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, are sought to be moulded to conform to a set pattern, to subscribe to the interests of the single-party State. And now, since the beginning of the second world war, paradoxically enough, 'children—more children' for the State, has been adopted by the Soviets also. Why does the Brotherhood of the International Proletariat demand 'teeming millions'? Such a population policy of the State implies that the dignity of the woman is recognised only in the context of, and to the extent it promotes, the interests of the nation's power and glory. To emancipate woman only for the children she bears, to respect woman only because she is prolific, is an affront to her soul. The flaming idealism of Lenin has been gradually shoved away by the sordid motives of competitive national aggrandizement. It is unfortunate that the only social system that could have veered the world away from aggressive nationalism and selfishness has itself been trapped in the ruck of competitive, narrow, State interests. As Julian Huxley points out, 'the family has been produced by Nature, the nation by Man himself.' The family is an ancient biological institution. Kinship is its emotional stimulus. The modern Nation State is the outgrowth from certain social, economic, political and environmental conditions and dates from about the Renaissance period in Europe, that is, about 1500 A. D. Group sentiment holds the nation together. This group sentiment is but a projection of kinship into larger human aggregates; but, while kinship has been creative, group sentiment is easily perverted to subserve expansionist patriotism against the ideal of common humanity. This group sentiment, the active consciousness of the oneness of nationality, if it expresses itself in the perfectly legitimate and essential patriotic urge to be free from external domination, serves



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basis. In 1926, only 40 per cent of the women had exercised the vote while by 1934 more than 90 per cent voted. It is true that the franchise in Soviet Russia, where there is the one-party system and that one party rules the State, has not the same significance that the political vote has in democratic countries. However, what is relevant in this context is the fact that in the election of the Soviet, in the management of the collective farms and the factories, women have the same voice as men. Though, in every sphere, actually recorded statistical figures do not reveal a state of absolute equality of women and men, there is an unmistakable approximation to cultural and social equality between the sexes. Legal and constitutional rights apply to all citizens alike. Urbanization and rapid industrialization have furthered this equalization process considerably. Collectivisation of farming has liberated the women and the young from the age-old authority of the manager of the household. In Czarist Russia, the wife and the children were used by the Russian peasant as his farm capital. To-day, even in the Moslem East, women have come into their own in economic and administrative activities. A community of interest is thus particularly seen between the Soviet State and the womenfolk of U.S.S.R. A net-work of public services, covering different aspects of individual and collective life, enmeshes the Russian mother and the child so that by assuming many of the cares and responsibilities of the parents, the State greatly facilitates the participation of women in industrial, economic and social life. Creches for babies in factories and on collective farms: equal pay for women for equal work: leave on full pay before and after child-birth and free medical treatment: equal access to higher education, scientific as well as technical, based on the sole test of efficiency in the lower grades: are some of the more important reforms effected by the Soviets which have been instrumental in bringing women into their own. Though family life has become



✓ Somewhat unstable because of this sudden spurt in opportunities for equal participation in national life, the family—even in the U.S.S.R.—remains the primary form of social organization. The guarantee of collective security against different individual risks has hastened the process of emancipation of women. This fundamental remoulding and re-ordering of human relations in Soviet Russia is symbolized in the irreconcilable contrast between an old Russian adage, 'a hen is not a bird; nor a woman, a human being' and Lenin's clarion call to the womanhood of Soviet Russia in his famous dictum— 'Every cook must learn to rule the State.' It is ridiculous to talk jeeringly of 'the dictatorship of women supplanting the dictatorship of the proletariat' as some unsympathetic impressionist critics have done. ✓ Whatever the blunders and excesses Soviet Russia may have committed in the early years of its revolutionary zeal in other respects, whatever be the sinister truth about the censorship beyond the 'iron curtain' across Europe from the Baltic down to the Black Sea, whatever political and diplomatic machinations Stalinist Russia may be accused of in recent years in her competitive power-policies with Great Britain and the United States on the European and Asiatic chessboards, the achievements of U.S.S.R. in emancipating its womenfolk are to be admired and emulated, particularly when one recollects the grim truth that as late as in 1917 Russian women were as ignorant and oppressed as women in China or India or in ✓ any other backward country. In 1935, over 60 per cent of all able-bodied women of working age were employed, contrasting with about 40 per cent in U.S.A.; 33 per cent of all employed persons were women (in 1936) contrasting with 31 per cent in Germany and 24 per cent in U.S.A. (in 1940). Almost from scratch, in the brief span of less than three decades, the Soviets have erected an economic and cultural system whose achievements appear almost incredible to those who have not actually wit-



as a civilizing and creative political force. This was true of the nineteenth century Europe and is now helping to mould the dependent regions of Asia into live and free organic entities out of their age-long torpor and subjection. However, the mythical implications of this group sentiment are many and dangerous and can be easily exploited by unscrupulous political adventurers so that not infrequently a nation becomes 'a society united by a common error as to its origin and a common aversion to its neighbours.' Regimentation to a lifeless pattern imposed from above and de-intellectualism are the very basis of totalitarianism. It was Paul Drucker who once characterized all planners as improvisers. However thoroughly directed and managed, 'cultural' improvisation by a bureaucratic hierarchy is not really conducive to the harmonious development of human personality. Individuals become pawns and the sanctity of individual personality is not recognized as inviolate. Reflective consciousness is the unique gift that human beings possess and is denied to lesser organisms. In every totalitarian State, capitalist or communist, it is the free exercise of these reflective powers that is sought to be silenced. Even the idea of the Functional State may be over-done to the detriment of the fruition of individual personality. "The State is not a goal of human activity but only a means. It is not a sociological synthesis but merely a form of sociality" so that all attempts to turn the State into the sole unifying power of society obstruct the path of social progress. "What should be retained from the modern State is its structural value, the progress in means of protection, order and defense, the development of instruments of culture and activity and material data of an evolution evidently useful and worthy of man—above all, the ethical, juridical, political and social conquests made by the State or through the State... what must be rejected is the State's claim to ethicity, the monistic conception of its sociological character, its consequent and absurd totalitar-



ianism—in a word, the coercive political unification of society in the State, and the submerging in the State of human personality” (Luigi Sturgo, *Inner Laws of Society*, pp. 297—298). In all Fascist countries, ‘the cult of the cradle’ was assigned supreme importance. And today, in U. S. S. R. also, we find fecundity is revered as a worthy ‘patriotic’ virtue ! Why ?—because, babies are potential citizens and potential soldiers ! Respect for maternity is different : it can exist in its highest form without this deliberate and systematized population cult engineered by the State itself. In the wake of what Cicely Hamilton in her book *Modern Italy* calls ‘the cult of the cradle’ follows a suspicion that woman’s real personality may in reality be stifled. This surely is not the way for ennobling motherhood but only for its debasement.

Women and Work

In all agricultural communities based on domestic and family work and on handicrafts, man and woman work together. Wordsworth in his sonnet ‘*Nuns Fret Not*’ writes glowingly of ‘maids at the wheel sitting blithe and happy.’ Spinning at the cottage doorway and the other leisure-time handicrafts, grinding and husking of corn for payment, work on the agricultural farms in co-operation with their men, are still quite common in every Indian village for women. To eke out a subsistence living, every individual member of the house-hold, including children, must work. The Industrial Revolution, characterized by the displacement of the customary decentralized production in small units by the factory system organized on a capitalist basis, broke up the old family basis in Great Britain and other countries, temporarily throwing women into idleness and destitution by depriving them of their income-earning avocations in their spare-time : but later, it has assigned to women a definite role to play outside of the home and has become an important influence in building



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up a new economic foundation for a form of society where in the equality of sexes can no longer be denied.

The flowering of woman's innate abilities and their full utilization is as beneficent and necessary to commonweal as that of man's. All education should be open to women and men on the same terms. "Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection: permit not a woman to teach nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (*Verse from Timothy—ii*). It is interesting to note that Frederick, the Great, of Germany selected this couplet as the text at the thanksgiving service he ordered to be arranged to commemorate the victory of the Prussian arms against the forces of Empress Maria Theresa! It is not such learning that woman should have. She should be free to pursue any subject of study on completely equal terms with man and to make what use she thinks fit of the knowledge she acquires. The mere granting of the political vote to women or any other forms of legal equality would be of little purpose. If there is to be no gap between legislation and reality, positive opportunities to actively and freely participate in public life must be provided to women. It must be realized that the start is in no way the same between the two sexes. Woman has weighty initial handicaps. "There can be no freedom of contract where there is no equality of status" (Wendell Holmes). One is reminded of Anatole France's jibe at the impartiality and greatness of justice, in *La Revolte des Anges*, that the millionaire and the starving pauper are punished equally for the same offence—for stealing a loaf of bread! Particularly in professions it is not such spurious equality between the sexes that is desired. As John Stuart Mill in his epochal essay, *The Subjection of Women* (1869), stated: "With regard to the fitness of women not only to participate in elections but themselves to hold offices or practise professions involving important public responsibilities—I have already observed that this consideration is not



essential to the practical question in dispute; since any woman who succeeds in an open profession proves by that very fact that she is qualified for it. And in the case of public offices, if the political system of the country is such as to exclude unfit men, it will equally exclude unfit women As long as therefore it is acknowledged that even a few women may be fit for these duties, the laws which shut the doors on these exceptions cannot be justified by any opinion which can be held respecting the capacities of women in general." If it is argued that higher education 'defeminises' women, may it not be countered, with an equal measure of validity, that higher education pares down the impulse to fatherhood? The truth is that neither consequence ensues to any noticeable extent and any generalization in this regard is fatuous. There is an axiomatic relationship between professional education and professional opportunities. Barrier to woman's higher education keep women away from professional fields. So that, unless facilities are thrown quite open to women to train and equip themselves with the requisite knowledge and experience, women will be largely precluded from entering the more important professions though there are no legal obstacles in their path. In fact, taking cognizance of the special disabilities weighing on women at present, they must be given even favoured treatment in the matter of education. Marriage and motherhood can be combined with professional or other employment. As doctors, teachers, social workers, women can bring feminine gifts for the amelioration of human suffering and promotion of common welfare. It is noteworthy that in Great Britain a woman, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, has been Minister of Education. Welfare administration, work connected with medical and health services, management of educational institutions, the imparting and supervision of elementary vocational guidance—these and other duties women can discharge with exceptional ability. Infant and child-welfare work



and nursing are intimately related to motherhood. As professions, these are complementary to the medical field. Motherhood and service to others in ailment are 'natural' to womanliness. As such, nursing and the medical profession are well-suited to woman's aptitudes. There have been in Great Britain medical women like Elizabeth Garrett Anderson or Dr. Ida Mann, the recently appointed Reader in ophthalmology in the 'conservative' medical school at the Oxford University, who 'have become good doctors, despite the fact that they are women.' Secretarial work, journalism, the stage and even business and commerce, the woman may enter. Even in a highly advanced country like Great Britain women have been effectively shut out from executive offices of business and commercial houses though there have been exceptions like Miss Nettlefold, Viscountess Rhondda, Miss Haslett and the single woman stockbroker (!) Miss Gordon Holmes. In 1931, out of a total number of 21,054,000 occupied persons in Great Britain, 6,265,000 or 29.8 per cent were females. This percentage had hardly improved since 1911. Most of the women workers were segregated and concentrated into particular occupations of which personal service alone absorbed 30.7 per cent of all occupied females. Subsequently women could be found entering in noticeable numbers in trades and professions previously monopolized by males (cf. Mark Abrams, *The Condition of the British people, 1911-1945*, pp. 56-59). Women can, with advantage take to architecture. In architecture one has to see shapes, as one appreciates melody, in a sensual experience. Architecture is concerned with structure, accommodation and appearance: it resembles painting and sculpture: but it is design in spaces. An aesthetic outlook is indispensable to be a successful architect. And, sense of charm, orderliness, beauty is innate in woman more than in man. Architecture is a visual art in which, to be successful, a sense of pattern is indispensable. It is therefore a profession wherein, given adequate facilities and the



requisite training and apprenticeship, women can fit in pre-eminently well. It is thus difficult to rationalize the exclusion of women from most of the professional fields. Work is as natural to woman as to man and 'the majesty of life is in work.'

Biological, economic, and political considerations are all vitally important. But beyond all these is 'culture' that ultimately counts. What is this 'culture' we so much talk about? Murdock epitomizes much valuable material on this subject when he analyzes culture as being learned, inculcated, social, ideational, gratifying, adaptative and integrative. Much cant has been said and written about culture and what men and nations have understood by it has most often depended on the blinkers through which they have chosen to have its perspective. Dynamically, we may say, "culture is the total, miscellaneous aggregate of the products of human activity and invention which are transmitted and communicated to other human beings and succeeding generations thereof" (J. K. Folsom, *The Family and Democratic Society*, pp. 46-47) so that, if an analogy may be offered, if the human community can be visualized as a musical instrument, culture corresponds to the piece of music or tune played upon it. How can woman, then, participate in and contribute to the cultural development of a community or of a nation or of the human species unless she is absolutely free to drink deep at the springs of art, science, philosophy and literature? Unless women have equal rights and opportunities to become doctors, educationists, writers, artists, teachers and scientists, how can they become scions of culture? As for woman's capacity to engage in these diverse activities, John Stuart Mill, having demonstrated the absurdity of prescribing certain types of work as 'natural' to woman, goes so far as to say: "if anything conclusive could be inferred from experience, it would be that the things which women are not allowed to do are the very ones for which



they are peculiarly qualified." On the need for the economic independence of women, apart from the characteristically Shavian touch of superior cynicism, there is much sound commonsense and wisdom in Bernard Shaw's profession of faith: "I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character in its units, should organize itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their affection or convictions" (Preface, *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*).

Work and Home

It is best to so arrange woman's professional or other work as to supplement, and not supplant, home responsibilities. Electricity helps to bring work to the home; an extreme degree of decentralization in production is rendered possible through the use of electricity as motive power. The much-advertised economies of large-scale production concentrated in a few gigantic plants have now become less sure from the viewpoint of social costs, and electricity helps to solve the problem by making it possible to take work to the home and has thus proved itself to be a friend of the modern family. Experience in recent years in U.S.A. and other western countries has shown, in certain extreme cases of complete negligence of family ideal some disadvantages ensue: a sterile home environment for the children results because children are left at home without the companionship and watchful guidance of their parents: a falling birth-rate is said to be another consequence. Strenuous and over-crowded professional work may in fact hamper the development of personality instead of facilitating it. Recent statistical studies in Great Britain and U. S. A. reveal that in many cases woman's professional work outside of the home has been actuated by the desire to improve the family's standard of living rather than by woman's ideas of



independence. The disabilities that are becoming evident in the wake of the wholesale full-time employment of women in these and other countries are leading to a change in the outlook of thinking men and women. It is necessary to be clear on this point because there seems to be an apparent conflict between woman's employment in any sphere of work and her maternal responsibilities in the family. What is stressed is that every woman should have the unrestrained right to enter any occupation she likes provided she has the requisite training for the same, on the same terms as are applicable to men. All educational and other facilities for this must be provided. At the same time, the general education imparted in society must be designed to promote her sense of responsibilities to the family and to stress the fact that, beyond the conception of equal rights and the desire for economic independence which are essential, there is the supreme idea of realizing her true self. Education is not merely training for shaping the next generation on the present ideals of individual and social life but, more, for new ideas and knowledge which is free, free to accept or reject authority. As Kant observed, "Children ought to be educated, not for the present but for a possibly improved condition of man in the future." "It has been said that the schools must follow-not lead. This statement is based on a false view of education. We educate for the future—beyond ourselves." (H. G. Stead, *Full Stature-Education and Tomorrow*, p. 135) and educators must always seek to realize their true function :

"We are the workers of a new dawn,
...Men who look forward and not back."

In the household as well as in the wider community, each woman must be conscious of her independent personality with a will of her own. Woman herself will keep aloof from such kinds of work as are likely to militate against the development of her personality. The chief concern



should honour and obey and she should merge herself in him. Thus woman was never a free agent. According to *Manu Smriti*, a woman is denied rights to property nor can she leave her husband and live apart. Divorce is unknown to Hindu Law. Indissoluble monogamous marriage has been the basis of Hindu view of family life so far as women are concerned, for a man can marry any number of wives.

However, though legally woman was allowed no personal rights, inspite of the insistence on her duties in turn to her parents, to husband and to sons, dispite the fact there was no vestige of economic independence given to her, the ancients did not aim at female slavery. It was not their intention to keep down woman ignorant and foolish. Their conception wholly centred around duties. They sought to ennoble womanhood in other ways, though the concept of personal rights was alien to them. The husband was enjoined to be faithful to his wife and was adured to be 'respectful' to her. "Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, brothers-in-law who desire (their own) welfare" (Manu). A son's duties to his mother transcend his duties to his elders, or to his teachers or to his own father. The apotheosis of the mother is greatest in ancient Indian civilization. The old adage (*Janani Janmabhumischa Swargadapi Gariyasi*)—that "the land of one's birth and one's mother are superior to the kingdom of Gods"—is pregnant with the Hindu idealization of motherhood: the religious ideals of Hinduism are impregnated with the nobility of the ordinary motherhood and not with 'the Majesty of Fatherhood.' In Christianity, God is the Father and "whoso loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" is what the Gospels ordain—the Almighty is made to plead for Himself!

Manu avers that the husband and the wife are equal —(*Vipra Prahustatha Chaitadya Bharla Sa Smrutangana*)|



Also, wife is the husband's truest friend, counsellor and companion. (*Gruhini Sachiva Sakhi Mitha Priyasishya Lalite Kalavidhou*). That women, like *Sudras*, were to be prohibited from the study of the *Vedic* lore was not the view either. There were *Brahmavadinis* like *Maitreyi*, *Kasakristsna* and *Gargi*, life-long students of metaphysics, theology and philosophy, who attained the pinnacle of excellence in scholarship. A review of ancient Indian culture reveals that among women there were able administrators and political leaders, patrons of arts and culture writers of great literary distinction, though their names, have now degenerated into mere fable, ballad and song to lull little children to sleep. Though *Goutama*, the Buddha, was himself prejudiced against women (in one of his homilies to his devotees he solemnly adjures them that secrecy, and not frankness, belongs to these three—to women, to untruth, to priesthood), women were not uncommonly admitted into the Buddhist Order. Though *Goutama* believed that women could be pious and holy and could attain sanctity, he was reluctant to admit them into the Order of Monks. "How, Lord, are we to conduct ourselves with regard to womankind?" Ananda, his favourite disciple queries—"Don't see them, Ananda," adjures the Master, "But if we see them what are we to do?"—"Abstain from speech"—"But if they should speak to us?"—"Keep wide awake." The Buddha subsequently yields to the persistent remonstration of Ananda on behalf of women. On a later occasion, reflecting retrospectively, the Buddha regrets this admittance of women into the Holy Order. "If, Ananda, women had not received permission to enter the Order, the pure religion would have lasted long, the good law would have stood for a thousand years. But since they have received that permission, it will now stand fast for only five hundred years" (*Goutama, The Buddha*, Sir S. Radhakrishnan, p. 14). Even as late as in 600 A. D. there is historical



about the family seems to be not so much how strong it may be as an economic unit as how well it performs its functions for the harmonious development of the personalities of its individual members. It is, above all, the individual personality of the father, the mother and the child that is of the highest importance. For this to be promoted in full, the family should be a democratic unit in a democratic society : society should guarantee to every individual member a basic irreducible modicum of economic security and well-being. Here is one of the borderlands of different social sciences. The place of woman in society and the future of the institution of family is essentially a sociological problem ; at the same time important economic and political influences impinge on it.



CHAPTER III.

Women in our India

Woman's place in Ancient Indian Culture

When paternal authority was fully developed and was accepted as the cornerstone of family life, marriage relationship was sought to be sanctified by religious vows and ritual. The Hindu marriage is a 'holy' union consummated according to 'sacred' laws for the performance of religious duties and therefore is a sacrament and not a contract. Being in no respect a contractual relationship, the mere fact that a marriage between a Hindu male and female has been performed during the minority or without the consent of either party does not render the marriage invalid. In ancient Hindu society marriage by purchase was disallowed and 'no father who knows the law must take even the smallest gratuity for his daughter.' Manu characterizes parents who receive gifts in return 'sellers of their offspring.' The Law-giver also prescribes: "To a distinguished, handsome suitor should a father give his daughter. . . . But the maiden, . . . though of marriageable age, should rather stop in her father's house until death than that he should ever give her to a man destitute of good qualities." Marriage by capture and abduction was also condemned by Manu's code, though legally it was permitted in respect of the warrior-class, the *Kshatriyas*. Till she was married, a girl was to be in the absolute control of the father: after her marriage, she was subject to the will of the husband whom



evidence in the writings of Hiuen Tsiang and other observers testifying to the fact that woman could be found taking active part even in highly abstract religious, metaphysical and philosophical discourses. Nor were these few women scholars exceptions. Even ordinarily, most of the girls, till they were married, prosecuted their studies in the Vedic and other Scriptures. Knowledge was not to be denied to women. Only when child marriage and other perverse social customs corrupted the society about 300 B.C. women's education suffered a serious set-back from which it has not recovered till today. Ladies in ancient India were expected to be proficient in æsthetic pursuits like music, dancing and painting, and in useful vocations like gardening, house decoration and toy-making. Sculptural and literary evidence there is in abundance to show that the *purdah* system was very uncommon in Hindu society before the external invasions. Women were not only encouraged to take to advanced learning, some careers also were open to them—the commonest of them being the teaching profession: some women selected the medical career. When child marriage became common, female education deteriorated considerably: seclusion and *purdah* came to be widely practised as forms of propriety and modesty. When these and other noxious influences corroded and destroyed all that was best in the ancient culture, the theory of woman's perpetual tutelage was propounded and came to be practised in its worst forms. Since about 250 B. C. till almost recently it has had uninterrupted reign in Indian society. Originally, the idea of affording protection to woman was in men's minds, along with the idea of restricting woman's freedom. It soon degenerated into an absolute denial of all elementary human privileges to woman. Pseudo-puritanical obsession distorted social vision and rationalism was smothered. There has never been any truly religious sanction for most of these pernicious customs. (Hinduism is what is ordained



in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmanas*. Even the *Smritis*, belonging to a later period, cannot be taken as authoritative. In fact, even the *Manu Smriti* itself is contradictory in many instances). Perversities of social custom, through long persistence, assume a semi-mandatory character and non-adherence to such 'tradition' bequeathed to posterity by 'sires' is condemned as a lapse from the moral code of conduct. It was thus only in the later periods that these seemingly religious injunctions were pitch-forked into religious dogma that were themselves perverted. These restrictions on women in Indian society are humiliating; they are senseless anachronisms from a dead past. The sooner they are scrapped, the better.

The State should step in

In this regard, as in other respects, particularly in a backward country like India, the State can do much. True, you cannot legislate people into prosperity or harmony or happiness. But you can surely legislate to untie the existing bonds and to facilitate the success of other direct efforts towards social progress. No doubt, constitutional safeguards, rights and guarantees are largely symbolic. After the last war, among the fourteen countries that constitutionally recognized the equality of sexes, Norway, Sweden, Denmark were not included. However, the fact of equality was more actively prevalent in actual economic and social life in these countries than in most others. But legal recognition of perfectly equal status is the first step and is necessary: all legal disabilities cramp-ing women at present should be removed. In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Pasha tore off the veil, shattered the ignominious harem, abolished child-marriage and set women on their feet. In Russia a complete metamorphosis beyond all recognition has been effected primarily through State instrumentality. Where the people themselves are poor and illiterate, while adopting all devices for educating



and enlightening public opinion so that society may be reformed from the bottom, the State should enforce certain regulations so that the pace of progress may be accelerated. Otherwise, it will take very long to free ourselves from the dead-weight of the past. Certain important obstacles hindering progress must be forcibly broken down. Or else, the process of change will prove extremely difficult and painful.

The women behind the *Purdah*, with all their prejudices, inertia, obstinacy and superstitions; the child-mothers who are ignorant of the responsibilities of motherhood; the women for whom their tiny home is the whole universe and who are stupidly oblivious of the wider outside world and its many achievements and problems; womenfolk who do not know even to read and who are born and bred as drudging machines; they are all a drag on the society. Some modern psychologists there are who believe that a child would be lucky if it had no parents at all—a blasphemy indeed! But there is some trace of truth tucked away underneath it; that, while an intelligent and understanding mother is an asset in building up the character of the child, an ignorant and drudging 'good' mother only spoils the child. Her attachment is, at best, weak, sentimental, obstinate. It is never of the enlightened, courageous type. She cannot understand and foster the natural emotions and urges of the child. The rising generation we always say, is in the hands of the women of today and if the woman 'who rocks the cradle' is of the ignorant, superstitious, 'kow-towing' type quite unaware of any will of her own, it is unlikely that the child will grow up into a noble specimen of manhood, courageous and independent.

Heredity and environment

A dissertation into the relative influence of heredity and environment in moulding human character may be helpful to show the equal importance of developing fully



and freely the personality of the mother and of fostering a very congenial and enlightened home atmosphere. Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, was a 'hereditarian'. Karl Pearson, of the Galton laboratories, pursued his teacher's work. The Galton-Pearson school believes that 'nature' is ten-fold as powerful as 'nurture' in determining anyone's character. The 'environmentalist' approach (L. F. Ward's *Applied Sociology* published as early as in 1906 was one of the earliest and forceful presentations of this school of thought) attributes the larger measure of influence to 'nurture' or 'social heredity'. Heredity vs. Environment is not a happy way of stating the problem. Instead of neutralising each other, the two are concurrent influences and the strength of each is related to the degree of differentiation. "If the environment differs greatly as compared with heredity, the share of environment in determining traits which are susceptible to environmental influences is large. If, on the other hand, there are large genetic differences and small environmental differences, the share of heredity is relatively large" (Newman, Freeman and Holzinger, *Twins: A Study of Heredity and Environment*, p. 359). While it is true that Freudian philosophy plumps for 'familistic social psychology' to the exclusion of non-family and post-adolescence influences on the character of each individual, it is incontrovertible that the growth of one's personality is largely affected by the conditions obtaining in the parental family in which the child is born and is brought up. It was because of the realization of this fact that Plato's ideal State was to be based on the directed development of the succeeding generations though it is true that Plato over-emphasized only this aspect. Today life sciences have made social work more 'child-minded.' The child is no longer a mere object of idle curiosity for its innocent pranks, harmless devilry or cantankerous mischief. Childhood is the twig-bending period of human life. Of the parents, the mother has the greater



care of children in their teens. She must be a good educator: she must know how to avoid mistakes: she must know how to discharge her responsibilities well and how not to bother too much. Encouragement should be the fundamental basis of upbringing children. The child's innate qualities of courage and curiosity should not be smothered but must be preserved and developed rightly so that the child may grow up intelligent and confident but not dull-minded and weak, nor presumptuous and rash. The child should not be looked after or helped more than necessary lest he should be pampered and spoilt or grow up a dependent weakling. Nor should the kid be brought up in fear, by bribery or punishment. This most complicated art, for such it surely is, how can an ignorant mother understand and practise? 'Education should start with the grandparents' wittily said a great philosopher. Of course, we cannot repair the neglect of two generations back. We must at least, right now, start with the complete and unrestrained education of all the boys and girls in our generation so that those who come after us may not suffer from handicaps and failings that now we are subject to. Is not then much dependent on the qualities and aspirations of the hand that rocks the cradle, if family is the 'conditioning cradle of the child's personality?' And, it is the free and enlightened mother who is conscious of her personality that can provide the proper home environment to the child in its teens and formative years and not the ignorant, submissive, retiring mother. And again, though it is true that the disparities in the disposition, habits and ideas of different individuals are largely attributable to the dissimilar environment in which they have grown and the unequal opportunities they have had for the development of their individual abilities, it is a fallacy that all will be equal and will shape out similarly were they to be granted exactly equal opportunities and facilities. The congenital abilities of persons, like their physical features, differ.



"There can be no doubt that mental as well as physical disorders are inherited... The marriage of two feeble-minded persons produces with great frequency a family of feeble-minded children... The inheritance in certain families of the more striking mental attributes cannot be denied" (E. B. Ford, *The Study of Heredity*, pp. 214-216). If, therefore, the offspring are to develop into mentally vigorous, freedom-loving and aspiring citizens with an unflinching faith in their own and their country's destiny, their mothers—not only their fathers—should possess these mental attributes. In fact there are psychologists who maintain that most of the variations in the intelligence quotient of the population are inexplicable unless it be by heredity. Though such a view may appear to give undue weightage to heredity as against environment, it is basically true that "development is neither an unfolding of heredity without influence from the environment nor a process of being passively moulded by the environment: it consists of active responses by the organism to environmental forces" (R. S. Woodworth, *Psychology*, p. 240).

What is of chief significance is this: by heredity as well as by environment, the child has its start in life in the parental home. In the home itself it is the mother that influences the child's mind more than the father. The healthy development of woman's self is therefore vital in regard to both respects, if the child is to be afforded a proper start in this world: for, as Zeno, the Founder of Stoicism, declared, "nothing destitute of consciousness and reason can produce out of itself beings endowed with consciousness and reason." Even woman's unrestricted responsibility in the home itself carries her influence far beyond the limited home boundaries for, 'rearing babies through happy, healthy childhood to independent maturity is even more important than wiring aeroplanes, and is a very much more absorbing and exacting task' (Gertrude Williams, *Women and Work*, p. 126). Let women therefore



be equal citizens, with all the attendant inconveniences and privileges of equality. Let them feel free to arrange and direct their lives according to their own preferences. The society will gain immeasurably and lose little thereby. Whatever be the ethical nomenclature used, in ancient India, the truth is that the family was never a democratic unit and woman was not recognized as a distinct co-equal human being with a personality all her own.

The common problems in Indian society

Communal minorities engineered by the machinations of a few power-seekers have long been impeding the progress of the country. Not constructive work for the amelioration of the many ills eating into the vitals of the social organism and for improving the living conditions of the masses but 'hair-trigger' criticism of one another and log-rolling for grasping petty advantages is their exclusive avocation. In their political gambles they exploit the ignorant fanaticism of religious groups and make millions of lives mere pawns in their games. Unreal cleavages and factions are created on communal lines to subserve the ambitious self-interest of a few. And, these fissiparous tendencies have been pampered by the foreign government for its own purposes. The most depressed class in our society are our womenfolk. Denied rights to property, secluded from the wider dynamic world, confined to their homes, clamped down by the shackles of antiquated social customs, steeped in a hideous bog of poverty, ignorance, squalor and ill-health, with no interests in life except marriages, feasts and ancestral worship, it is regrettable that such a large depressed class, which, in numbers is half of the society, should remain mute so long, inured to such an unenviable lot in life. However, an important caveat may be entered here. Some of these disabilities are not confined to women. Society itself has remained stagnant for centuries. For us, the clock of progress came to a



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✓ dead stop when the British set foot here. For instance, ninety per cent illiteracy, on the eve of the dawn of freedom, is the shameful and oppressive legacy of a hundred and fifty years of British rule in India. What real advancement is possible, in any direction, unless this percentage of ignorance is reversed into one of literacy in the next decade or two? Otherwise, all economic and social plans of ours must remain utopian pipe-dreams. In 1917, in Czarist Russia about 75 per cent of the population were illiterate and by 1935 illiteracy was all but liquidated. ✓ We must accomplish the same,—if anything, quicker. We cannot afford to do a whit less or slower. That is the heavy burden, and at the same time the supreme opportunity, on the first Indian National Government. All sections in the community, urban and rural, male and female, Muslim and Hindu, Parsi and Christian, young and old,—are afflicted alike with the pests of ignorance, poverty, disease, squalor and idleness. The common people of India have almost forgotten how to smile. They just exist, without pride, without hope. These are problems fundamental to the whole texture of society which has for a very long time become socially, politically and economically dormant. The signs of healthy growth have been conspicuously absent. Each one of us must pull himself or herself out of this mental sterility. There is not such a marked rivalry of the sexes here as in the West. There has been in India nothing like the bitter opposition to the Women's Suffragette Movement in Great Britain. Maybe, with the removal of the more fundamental and elementary disabilities common to all, unless women's emancipation synchronizes with such progress, the rivalry between the sexes may become more serious.

Legislative reforms

Under the 1919 Indian Franchise Act, the provincial legislatures were empowered to enfranchise women subject



to the same conditions of eligibility as were applicable to men. But the property or literacy qualifications still effectively debar most women from the political vote. In the 1946 elections in British India, three women have been returned to the Central Legislature and forty-eight to all the Provincial Assemblies together. The maximum number of women members is in the Madras Assembly to which eight have been returned from the reserved constituencies and three more from general constituencies. There are fifteen women in the Indian Constituent Assembly. Today, in British India, there are four Deputy Speakers of Provincial Assemblies, one parliamentary secretary and two ministers who are women. The All-India Women's Conference was first convened in 1926 and has been annually meeting since then. A glimpse into the thoughts and aspirations of the few educated and therefore self-conscious women in India can be had from their submission to the Joint Select Committee on India's Constitution: "We strongly urge the necessity of the specific recognition of women's inherent right to full citizenship and equal opportunities with men for public service to the country. Therefore in the Declaration of Fundamental Rights we wish it to be clearly stated that sex shall be no bar to any public employment, office, power or honour and in the exercise of any trade or calling." It is common knowledge that Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first social reformer to effectively campaign for the removal of the special disabilities clamping down Indian womanhood. The abolition of *suttee*, which was then common, was due to his unceasing agitation. In the twentieth century, the Widow-Remarriage Act, permitting, legally, widows to enter into wedlock again, the Sharada Act of 1929, fixing the marriageable age of girls at not less than 14 years, and similar measures have removed certain legal disabilities. Recently a Hindu Law Reforms Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir B. N. Rau and their recommendations envisage the



introduction of monogomy in Hindu marriage (the same should be extended to apply to the Muslim society) and the grant of the right to inherit property for women. The actual operation of such existing legislation has been very restricted because society has not taken enthusiastically to it. Also, even legally, much leeway has to be made up before equality of sexes is attained. Do not we think it absurd, in civilized society, to have one law for the rich and another code for the poor ? At the same time, how is it that we are reconciled to this fact—some of us even deem it necessary !—of ' one law for the male and quite the contrary for the female ' ? The Constituent Assembly will formulate a Charter of Fundamental Rights of Indian Citizenship. The Charter should in no way discriminate against womenfolk. Nothing less is rational : nothing else is acceptable to the enlightened women of India.

The 'awakening' womanhood of India

It is to be deplored that women's organizations themselves have for a long time misdirected their activities—if they were active at all !—and have not really permeated the villages spotted all over India and that any substantial work towards the uplift of women has not been done. It is a shame on Indian society that scarcely two per cent of the women can read and write. As for the women's organizations, the less said the better. Instead of swamping all their abilities, energies and resources in the all-abounding urgent task of emancipating Indian womanhood, many from among the few educated elite who have stepped into the public career, are aspirants to laurel wreaths, ' jockeying ' and log-rolling one another's claim for position and prestige, each one trying to play the principal but all in a pantomime ! The level of education is one of the surest criteria for assessing the development of a community. Ninety years back the *Wood Despatch on Education* of the Court of Directors observed, "The importance



Women in our India

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of female education in India cannot be overrated....By this means, a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men." And, the 1941 Census Report estimates: "Even now....the percentage of literacy among women is only two." Such then is the eloquent testimony to our progress—in the reverse gear! The Women's University in Bombay (to the eternal glory of Prof. Karve of Poona) has been a pioneering experiment in women's higher education in India. But this first one has remained, to date, the only one of its kind in India. One disquieting fact should be particularly stressed and corrected. The few fortunate women who have had the benefits of higher education seem to be quite oblivious of their immense responsibilities for the emancipation of the millions of women in the country-side and of the working and middle-class families in urban areas. Also, for many among these educated girls, education seems to be just a luxurious pastime. Ludicrously vieing with one another, patiently playing rod and line in the glittering waters of sophisticated society, enmeshed in the vulgar indecencies of fashion, strutting about in their laces and brocades and embroidered satin vests, they are as ignorant of the stinking realities in Indian society as canaries in a cage. Otherwise, how is one to understand this spectacle of many of the educated women doing nothing and lapsing into a life of luxurious idleness and of vain, inglorious pursuits? There are many qualified doctors and teachers among them who do not take up the calling of their profession. Each one of them could have taught hundreds of others. The resources available have been too limited and they have been dissipated. This has not happened in any other country. This should not have been allowed to happen in our own country particularly because the government itself was least interested in social progress and therefore the responsibilities devolving on private initiative and effort



were greater. Even hereafter, the State can only provide the necessary facilities. The educated women themselves must take active part in social reforms pertaining to women. Women and men should realize that true citizenship is earned through social work. Ultimately, it is only women that can emancipate themselves. On the other hand, there have been a few—rather too few—women leaders in the literary, social, cultural and political fields who have been rendering inestimable service for the Indian woman's emancipation.

Political movements and social changes

The non-co-operation movements launched by Gandhiji since 1920, apart from their political objectives, import and achievements, have drawn women of all classes and sections in all parts of India from their seclusion into the wider political and social vortex with all its eddies and criss-cross currents. Women have thus come into a more realistic and intimate touch with their own and others' political, economic and social problems. This has been, with no exaggeration, the most important factor in inducing the Indian woman to assert her independent self. Indian social evolution has been much influenced and hastened in the last three decades by the ideas propagated and movements initiated by the Indian National Congress. In fact, most of our intrepid women leaders are the products of these political movements. Another instance of their impingement on Indian society is the break-up of the caste rigidities that have been a curse on Hindu society for centuries. The problem of untouchability would not have come to the fore and with such insistence but for Gandhiji's persistent fight for its elimination. Creative nationalism which is not anti-rational breaks down many social barriers and gives an impetus to the emancipation of woman. It has been the common experience of many countries in the East as well as in the West that the movements for national free-



don have proved to be beneficent social upheavals. Political and economic developments are largely influenced by contemporary social conditions: at the same time they themselves impinge on the social framework and help to change its pattern. As Winifred Holtby points out in his recent book *Women*: "In India today the National Congress movement is one of the strongest forces of breaking a slave tradition. Women, whose parents accepted unquestioningly the principles of *sati* and *purdah*, have left their seclusion, unveiled their faces, picketed shops, attended public meetings and walked in processions. customs of submission and confinement, centuries-old, have been abandoned. Nor is Indian experience unique. In Egypt, Turkey, in Arabia, nationalism has aroused women from their long relegation to the status of semi-slavery. The need for citizenship has proved stronger than the barrier of sex."

In the thousands of Indian villages, women are engaged in domestic crafts, wherever home-crafts survive. They are help-mates in the fields, crafts-women at home and labouring 'hands' at seedling and harvest times. They should be made conscious of their abilities: all facilities should be given them for work: their work should be systematized: they should be made to discover their selves. The propagation of rural handicrafts like spinning by Gandhiji and the Congress has provided work to rural women. The All-India Spinners Association and the All-India Village Industries Association are private organizations that have been trying to systematize the handicraft work on a regular wage-payment basis. The Kasturba National Memorial Fund, with a voluntarily donated capital exceeding a crore of rupees and managed by a Board of independent trustees, is the first ambitious attempt to emancipate India's womanhood and will surely show a good record of real work in all the remote villages in a few years. For the vast masses of men as well as women of rural India, for the male and female employees living in the slums of



Commercial and industrial centres like Bombay and Ahmedabad, it is the problem of poverty that is most real and grim—a haunting fear of want. Ignorance, squalor, idleness and disease afflict them. Basic economic security, a minimum income floor guaranteeing to everyone a reasonable 'modicum' of economic well-being, is the crying and first need. In all attempts to rehabilitate India's teeming millions from this sub-subsistence level, womenfolk cannot be left out. In fact, progress will prove painful and will hobble without the emancipation of women. Today, Indian opinion is astir. In tune with developments in other countries, the imperative need for a planned utilization of available resources to build a stable and prosperous economy is realized in all quarters. In this planning for prosperity, mineral and other natural resources should not monopolize all attention and effort. The most valuable 'capital' of India lies dormant in her uneducated and unemployed men and women, and educational and psychological planning of this human riches is indispensable if social welfare is to be maximized. And, in devising ways and means for the optimum, least wasteful, development of our human material, scant attention is apt to be paid to the womenfolk. Though we may not copy their policies and methods, Soviet Russian achievements in the transformation of their rural women from the position of chattel to one of independent workers provide us a clear illustration of what organized and directed effort can accomplish. Do we want that their minds should remain asleep and functionless and, consequently, be of no use to society?

Eastern and Western Cultures

Duties or rights? The Eastern Mind has always been impressed with the nobility of the ideal of service. Eastern philosophy is pregnant with but one basic and enveloping theme—its flaming spiritual idealism that realized the ephemeral nature of material achievement. Hic jacet is



the end of all: therefore serve others through the performance of your duties—this has been the epitome of all religion and philosophy. This idea has permeated our society for thousands of years. It is this continuous insistence on the proper performance of one's *dharma* that has rendered our ancient culture hoary. In the West, in the earliest times when men's minds were theological no consistent concept of rights or duties was developed and there was only an abject surrender to an inexplicable superior non-human power: authority was attributed to Divine right and whatever the rulers ordained the subjects were to follow, for "kings could commit no sin." Then, when men's minds developed into the metaphysical pattern of thought there was vague talk of the general or collective will of the people and sovereignty of the people. Rousseau and others in the era of the French Revolution assumed a savage or happy State of Nature and explained the emergence of social institutions in 'Contractual' terminology. These were the glimmerings of a consistent theory of personal rights. Aristotle, the first inductive, and therefore systematic, scientist of modern civilization,—'that master of those who know'—is the fountain from which all that is best in the Western Culture and thought has sprung. However for a long time his teachings had no response. Not till the sixteenth century had Aristotle come into his own. It was then that European civilization took a turn. In the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Luther, Calvin, Descartes, Targot, Condorcet heralded and consummated this Aristotelian revival and rescued Europe from the barbarity into which it had sunk. The faith was revived that unlike the biological history of plant or of a tree, which can never rise higher than its physical growth, "in the mental and spiritual organism of human society lies the possibility of never-ending and unlimited progress." However, Western democratic thought has stressed the concept of privileges to the neglect of obligations. For a



long time European political thought was so exclusively pre-occupied with the carrot of political freedom that it failed to realize that such untrammelled insistence on individual rights as against individuals and society itself might lead to grave economic insecurity and might prove detrimental to commonweal.

For centuries, the cultural waters of Indian society have been stagnant. The tragedy of the present is all the more poignant in view of the magnificence of a hoary past. However, through all vicissitudes, the light of ancient India has continued to flicker and has not been extinguished. In the last half-century the merest ripples of a cultural renaissance are visible and, if Indian civilization is not to share oblivion with Babylonian, Egyptian and other Cultures, we should lay a sure bedrock for a glorious future. With the snapping of the bonds of political subordination the first obstacle in the path to progress would be removed. It is then for us to cross the rubicon and put forth our best efforts in a concerted manner, with courage and faith. A critical appreciation of the cultural setting in which one is to work, an innate sympathy for those who are wronged, are essential in any social reformer. What explains this decadence of Indian society? Through the ages, since the earliest times, synthesis has been conspicuously absent. This is true even of the age of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. The selfless seers, in their search for Truth, were at home in the empyrean heights but failed to appreciate the limitations and frailties of the mere mortals. There were some exceptions but generally the sages who aspired for the *Soham* stage of perfection lived in a 'dream of eternity,' renounced the world altogether and became solitary recluses in wild forests and on mountain heights contemplating the illusory splendour of Life Divine. Instead of seeking to remedy the society of its ills, they were repelled by the injustices in the world and preferred to retire into seclusion. Did they become



jivanmuktas ? Was Divine effulgence revealed unto them ? No one knows. But one thing is certain : this mystic brooding of those who were other-worldly-inclined took no notice of the deterioration in society. Buddhism was born out of a natural reformatory urge. 'A wrong to the unblest is an affront to all' was the impelling thought behind Goutama's weary search for new Light. However, Buddhism itself was not cast in a different mould from Hinduism. Contemplative passivity replaced metaphysical symbolism. Ancient Indian thought failed to effect a synthetic cohesion between moral and material progress. A single uniform fabric could not be woven for, life in this world was considered but a period of moral probation. Parallelism and not merger was the characteristic feature. (Even our literature is permeated by this—for instance, the majestic grandeur of the *Mahabharata* and the luscious and fragrant lyricity of the *Ramayana* stand apart—both are scintillatingly brilliant ; however the two patterns of genius nowhere coalesce). As Spengler points out in his *Decline of the West*, 'a sense of destiny' which has been the fundamental motif underlying Western Culture has been singularly absent from the Oriental mind. Even at its best, the Hindu mind, steeped exclusively in the pursuit of moral and spiritual glory and in philosophical speculation, preferred to keep away from all 'space-time consciousness.'

The western 'sense of destiny' stemmed from *Hellenic* thought. Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, sowed its seeds, each in his own distinctive way. Descartes proclaimed "I think : therefore I am." 'Doubt' was the one reality for Descartes. Hume spoke of the relativism of all human knowledge. Spengler himself no doubt attributes the decline of the West to the perverted over-obsession with 'sense of destiny.' What however needs to be stressed is that space-time consciousness is indispensable to the material progress of human society ; the creative values

of individual initiative must be recognised.) This is the underlying lesson of the achievements of the West. No doubt, there is much that is rotten in the Western Culture which is now threatening its future survival itself. The scientific materialism of the earlier free-thinker, soon deteriorated into a contempt for all philosophy, as expressed in the old cynical saw 'philosophy is the search of a blind man in a dark cellar for a black cat that is not there.' The 'sense of destiny' of the West degenerated from its flaming spirit of individualism, initiative and venture into a new paganism, much worse and more destructive than the old heathenism, that was engulfed in a supreme cult of aggressive selfishness. In Gurudev Tagore's memorable phrase, *Being* did not keep pace with *Knowing*. Western thought slumped down, inspite of astounding strides in logic, science and every other domain of human knowledge, morally to such low depths that quite a large number of people actually came to advocate war as a necessary social institution—'War is to mankind what maternity is to woman!' We have witnessed the peoples and leaders of Western nations gloating over their war victories—victories of Death over Life with pools of blood and streams of tears in their trail and with banners planted in desolate places on the ashes of devastated hearths and fields. The destructive powers of Scientific attainments have reached such colossal proportions that mankind has to abolish war for ever, or wars will eliminate mankind. While idealistic absolutism of the East is morphic, its counterpart, materialistic absolutism of the West is dangerous. Without a revival of moral values, Western Culture has no future. 'Science,' or the abuse of it, has 'bowed-out' for centuries all ethical values from Western thought and unless some type of 'ethics' is 'bowed-in' again the reclamation of western society from the enervating and suicidal quagmire into which it has been precipitated by its own extreme individualism would be impossible. Science and morals can no



longer be in two different camps. In this regard the West must look to the East for inspiration and guidance.

Ancient Indian philosophy of life, on the other hand, was too much pre-occupied with the Absolute and in effect, though it might not be the intention, has led to inertia in thought, lethargic acceptance of the *status quo*, and to an inclination towards 'tabooing' all critical analysis. Minimization of individual opinion, of what Diederot calls 'the stirring of doubt,' and exaltation of the wisdom of the past, supremacy of deduction and not of inductive logic is the inevitable consequence. Devoid of all material perception, the moral intuition of the venerable seers failed to permeate the common society. Hindu philosophy that once soared in the starry heavens was later on sold-out to false Gods by false scribes and religious heads who saddled on themselves the prerogative and duty to prescribe rigid rules of personal conduct and social propriety. The philosophy of the ancients lost its soul—that was the first step. Soon, it lost its mind: and now all consciousness of that philosophy is lost, because our minds have ceased to function. In the obsession with metaphysical absolutes, the human particulars came to be ignored. This has proved Indian Culture's 'Old Man of the Sea.' Self-realization, the *Nirvana* of the Hindus or the *Tao* of the Chinese, lies not in a detached contemplation of a Super-human Divinity or in morbid seclusion from all human society, but is possible only through active participation in life and promotion of commonweal. If some lament "since the fathers died have not all things remained the same," let them. All things just cannot remain the same. As Chesterton somewhere says it is only people with little imagination that live by the past, and what they create hardly differs from the old.

Every fibre of the texture of Indian society has been so far permeated with the *karma* philosophy. The Indian mind is imbued with an uncomplaining resignation to



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'Destiny'. Maybe, this subconscious *karma* inhibition has stood us in good stead during all these centuries of depression, poverty and misery. Nowhere else in the civilized world is life so bleak as in India. But this pathetic submission to one's lot has stood in the way of progress. The incentive to effort, the urge to progress, the wild aspiration for a sunny, happy and glorious life have all been crumpled. The *karma* doctrine has exercised no bracing effect on the society. It has only served as opium to deaden our sensitiveness and sensibilities. Even after political freedom is realized, a host of economic and social problems will remain. We will not solve them unless there is a fundamental change in our attitude to life.

Duties or Rights ?

This brief dissertation on Eastern and Western cultures has been prompted by our initial question—duties or rights ? Too long has the Indian woman meekly conformed to the 'duties' prescribed for her by 'religion' and to the restrictions imposed on her movements and personality by social 'tradition'. Let it be admitted, whatever may have been the nobility attached to motherhood, in Indian society the conception of woman's equal rights has been singularly absent and woman's personality, as such, has been rarely recognized. The concept of rights is the contribution of the West to human thought and we must imbibe it in full measure. The Indian woman has duties towards her husband, her kinsmen, her parents, and even to departed ancestors. Most of these ancient Indian strictures on womanhood represent 'the errors of ages grown hoary with the centuries.' Maybe, certain of these laws were, at one time, necessary and valid. But what may be deemed 'moral' in one period may have to be discarded in another. Bertrand Russell may have exaggerated when he characterizes sin as mostly 'geographical'. But it cannot be dismissed summarily as wholly wrong. Social conventions have neither universal



nor permanent validity. It should be borne in mind that what may be considered liberal in one age may become conservative in a succeeding period. As Radhakrishnan, that great modern interpreter of the treasures of the Eastern mind, has succinctly expressed, *Dharma* itself is an elastic tissue which clothes the growing body and if it is too rigid or tight it snaps. In our dynamic social pattern wherein social values as well as individual urges are subject to a process of continual change, birth, growth and decay, certain anachronistic customs, laws and ideals that are ill-suited to the changes should be unceremoniously discarded if human progress is not to be impeded. It is only inert matter that is static: change is the essence of life. Manu himself solemnly adjures, "Know that to be *Dharma* which is cultivated by the learned, the elect, those who are always free from hatred and passion, and which is at the same time readily responded to by the heart." If such were *Dharma*, then it cannot be immutably prescribed for all ages, for the same thing cannot appeal to the heart and the mind for all time. Morality itself, if it is to be creative, must be growing and developing. It is presumptuous to claim that any code of social convention is infallible and should therefore remain immutable through time. Even the modern scientist, following the tradition of Descartes and other scientific philosophers, inspite of the exactness of his mathematical apparatus and formulæ and experimental equipment, while he is conscious of the logic of his conclusions, claims no mathematical permanence for all time. He is, in Blake's words, 'Proud to man and humble to God.' His intellectual eminence is always associated with experimental modesty. When such is the case even in respect of established theorems in physical sciences, is it not utterly ridiculous to maintain that social conventions and codes that were laid down centuries back to suit the then contemporary social setting should still be accepted as norms of human behaviour today? Why should the un-



✓ Impeachable authority of the ancient thinkers, however eminent they might have been, be accepted? Let us remember, 'ideas travel upwards, manners downwards' (Bulwer). It is not argued that we must blindly break away from the past. Only what is good and applicable today is to be retained. The two ideals must merge together and coalesce : civilization can truly progress only if balanced on the complementary concepts of individual rights and social duties. If woman's freedom is not to degenerate into something cheap and shoddy, woman herself must be fully aware of her dual responsibilities to society as well as to herself.

✓ The Indian tradition has been too much pre-occupied with the conception of duties to the exclusion of personal rights. The son and the father, the pupil and the teacher, the wife and the husband, the citizen and the ruler, have all mutual duties to discharge. Maybe, if every individual properly fulfils the obligations enjoined on him or her, a well-ordered and happy society would emerge. Whatever be the value of this ideal conception, in actual practice, when all legal rights are vested in men and are completely denied to women, men are apt to forget their duties and assume a patronizing or authoritative or contemptuous attitude towards women. Men's behaviour to the other sex is liable to degenerate into contempt and derision. Divested of all rights and privileges, the Indian woman, through the ages, has become a mere appendage. True, the other extreme of obsession with the absolute inviolability of personal rights and individual freedom to the exclusion of all recognition of duties to neighbours or to society is apt to promote self-centred egoism to the detriment of social welfare. The feeling of independent personality is essentially not a material, not even a merely intellectual, but a subjective—call it even aesthetic, if you will—experience which is personal in the extreme. It defies analysis in mere words. As such, being something pertaining to the spirit,



the expression of an attitude, equalitarianism between the sexes cannot be effected or preserved by merely embalming it in constitutional safeguards, civil laws and social institutions. For instance, though, as Mrs. Newitt says, "it is in France that married women are still most handicapped by law, if not by tradition," in spite of the many legal and political disabilities, the French woman has been for many years socially more 'advanced' than women in many other countries. It is reality that counts : legality is but a means to it. Recognize, therefore, the legal and social equality of women with men : give women also all the rights of citizenship : let there be no disabilities imposed in virtue of sex : provide women the necessary, and equal, facilities for equipping themselves for any activity they cherish—they know best what work is best suited to them or what is natural to them : recognize their right to work and the right of independent living with economic freedom : but do not stop with mere constitutional provisions, for statutory provisions are of little worth if society does not practise them. Keats somewhere says, charmingly, maxims of philosophy are untrue for us until we feel them in our pulses. It should not be a case of *meliora probo : deteriora sequor* (I approve the better : but I follow the worse).

Recognition of woman's independent personality

▲ In actual life let every woman feel that she is an independent being with a personality of her own, free to pursue any vocation she chooses, with no limitations whatever on her educational, intellectual and civil equality—and then, only then, hark back to the ancient ideal of duties. Only then will man respect woman's personality : only then will women feel independent and creative : only then will man perform his duties and woman hers. Not the differentiation of sex but the fact of common humanity will be the dominant factor and with the harmonious and fullest development of the individual personality of men and



women alike, the community will really progress. Unless women are actively conscious of their personality, all their creative talents are stifled. Let women also enter and explore freely and vigorously the outer world and the realm of the mind and of the spirit. Let women also, like men have the right of way, free to choose their own careers, free to make their own adventures and their own experiments and free to learn from errors and experience. It is understandable why men should alone have 'the proved wisdom of experience.'

4 'The spark of an aspiring intelligence'
is as natural to woman as to man.

While it is true that since the 'swaddling-clothes' stage of civilized life society has been based on the economic system and the patriarchal family system, there has always been a third support—no less vital to civilization—the realm of the human mind. The Marxists believe that economic determinism is the all-explaining 'open-sesame' of human history and future. While Marx, Lenin and their camp-followers have all been uncompromising upholders of women's emancipation and their equal privileges, they were exclusively obsessed with the class struggle so that, they viewed woman's subjection, through the ages, through their economic-class-struggle blinkers. On the other hand, the Freudians are possessed with sexomania and attribute everything to the sex impulse which, they urge, is the sole motivating force in society. Both are mistaken in their over-emphasis to the exclusion of the other factors affecting individual lives and impinging on society in shaping its evolution. If it is admitted that life's content is something more than food, shelter and clothing; or comfort, luxuries and riches; or status, power and fame; or marriage, sexual gratification and procreation; —but that 'thought' is the pivotal centre of human progress, how can opportunities for the development and



ellowing of the mind and avenues for its free expression be denied to woman? All scientific knowledge has stemmed from curiosity to know or what Pavlov characterizes as the 'what-is-it?' reflex and it is a jaundiced view to presume that this impulse is confined to men. It is still a widely prevalent prejudice that

Men can be great when great occasions call

◀ In little duties women find their spheres,

◀ The narrow cares that cluster round the hearth.

Ogburn points out that inventions depend on a cultural demand for the invention, mental ability and the presence of the pre-requisites or preparatory elements to any inventions. He proceeds to state that inventive capacity is quite widely diffused. The fact that the actual achievements of women in the intellectual field have been meagre till now does not prove that intellectually they are inferior, as a class, to men. The truth is that 'all individuals with sufficient inherited capacity are not trained to invent,' (W. P. Ogburn and M. F. Nimkoff, *Sociology*, pp. 815-821). To woman, as to man, 'the spark of an aspiring intelligence' is common. Its blossoming forth depends on whether it is stifled in embryo or is carefully nurtured and promoted.

This is not to identify man and woman, for it is impossible to pervert biological facts: certain experiences and disabilities arising out of physiological make-up are peculiar to the female, for instance, the requirements of the period of pregnancy and of child-birth. Nor is it an expression of their free will if women blindly imitate and 'compete' with men. Nor is it denied that the psychological attributes of men and women such as emotion, instinct, suggestibility vary in their intensity. However, any clear dichotomy into feminine and masculine qualities and feelings would be unreliable. And, what is worse, to impose 'taboos' on the basis of such alleged differentiation is presumptuous. The differences in emotions and feelings



are true of individuals also—for instance, the congenital mental ability of any one person is different from that of another. What is urged is that every single individual, man or woman, should have the fullest and unbridled scope for the development and expression of individual human stature. The accident of sex should be no bar to equal facilities to woman for her proper physical, intellectual and moral development. How can woman partake in culture if she is denied the necessary education and the requisite opportunities? What the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey calls *Anschauung* (awareness) and *Erleben* (vital experience) are indispensable if man or man is to develop individual personality. One should not only know: one should also live through if one is to have real understanding. That 'the precious values of the human spirit have to be lived and realized by ourselves to be understood' is as old as Plato but needs to be re-emphasized, particularly in regard to the realization of woman's personality, for this fundamental truth has long been forgotten.

Dynamically, *personality* may be defined as the process of living. *Autonomy* (the tendency towards individualism) and *harmony* (the urge to conform to super individual wholes like culture, nation, society) are the two integrals of this personality. In the study of the growth of personality the traditional segmental or *atomistic* approach has been displaced of late by the new *holistic* (in the final analysis, Aristotelian) outlook. *Gestalt*, *totality*, *holism* are similar expressions. (The term *holism* was first used by F. C. Smuts in *Holism and Evolution* in the year 1926. Haldane, Meyer, Stern, Spann are all adherents of this new approach). The development of woman's personality must therefore be viewed as a whole so that it is not merely palliatives to remedy this handicap or that disability or to provide this particular facility or to concede a certain right (no doubt, each such measure has its use and necessity) that are needed but a fundamental change in the social attitude



itself. The sanctity of woman's personality, no less than man's, must be recognized and respected, as such and for its own sake. The *totality* approach or the *holistic* logic is concerned with systems or patterns and not with parts. Personality 'develops' ('growth' is not quite a happy word) mainly through learning. This learning is largely a psychological process. Woman lives in society—not in vacuum. The fullest recognition of woman's individuality is its logical corollary. No doubt, woman, on her side, as a member of society, has complementary duties to discharge towards society, to which we shall revert presently. As Spengler says, 'the object of our understanding is ourselves.' Human beings, women as well as men, may be for some time satisfied with the material comforts of life. Adequate food, raiment, shelter are elementary necessities. Liberty is a mockery devoid of economic adequacy and security. But the material comforts of life can never be substituted for intellectual and moral growth. As Plato makes Socrates say, "the unconsidered life is not worth living."

Recognition of woman's personality is not one-sided in its results. It is to the advantage of society itself that every single member of it, man or woman, should be enabled to contribute his or her most and best to society. It is important to realize that society is *relational*: the foremost member of it can contribute the maximum he is capable of only if all others beneath him also contribute their full share. In a society where woman's contribution is little, to that extent, man's contribution also is, therefore, automatically vitiated. No one can deny that "the most successful form of government and the happiest condition for the governed can only be attained in the State, as in the family, when masculine and feminine influences work in harmony."



CHAPTER IV

The Social Problems of Woman's Freedom

The Population problem—Woman's Emancipation and Fertility

Motherhood is sometimes inaptly, almost cynically, referred to as 'nature's handicap.' While men are free to indulge in sex gratification without having to bear the consequent responsibilities and worries, woman is visited by the natural consequence of her act and, so long as gratification of the sex impulse and motherhood went hand in hand, complete freedom and equality of woman would have presented no problems in regard to the biological function of woman; for it is improbable that such emancipation would deaden the passion for sex to any noticeable extent. However, now that science, through contraceptives, has rendered possible the separation of the sexual act and its consequence, child-bearing, it is plausible to argue that full emancipation of women may lead to dwindling population figures. No psychologist of renown has yet conclusively established that the desire for motherhood is a natural instinct in woman. May it not then be argued that, once she is freed from her present social conventions and traditional mould of thought and is allowed to moor into the wide outside world, the urge to maternity may taper off? Contraception has reached a stage of success wherein it has severed parental instincts from their sexual precursors. It is therefore argued by some " that philoprogenitive instincts



are alone too weak to effect social survival." The Roman matrons were socially the equals of men—when?—about the time of the *Punic* wars. At that time the Patrician Roman Class was dwindling and Roman civilization was decadent. The earlier Roman tradition expected the matron to be grave, self-contained, chiefly concerned with household duties and she was to devote herself to the nurture of a sturdy and intrepid race. With the social equality and growing freedom of women, licentiousness increased and, as a power, Rome no longer was held in esteem and awe. When the news of the earliest disasters at the hands of the invading Sueves and Goths reached his ears, Jerome exclaimed 'the barbarians are strong through our vice.' However, as Samuel Dill in his memorable treatise *Roman Society in the last century of the Western Empire* says, referring to the denunciation of contemporary later Roman society women by S. Jerome and other Christian teachers, ".....It is hard to believe that the reserve and delicacy of so many generations of social culture should have grown so helpless in the face of evil....the warm imagination of S. Jerome has probably exaggerated the peril.....There was much to amend in the morals of the Roman world. But we must not take the leader of a great moral reformation as a cool and dispassionate observer" (pp. 130-131). Sir Henry Maine characterized Roman marriage 'the laxest the western world has seen.' True, divorce was free: but no one can justly be dogmatic, on the basis of what evidence we have, that the freedom of divorce in the early days of the Roman Republic led to private and social immorality. Actually, laxity seems to have set in later due to Greek and Oriental influences. In France, in the inter-war period, womenfolk were 'possessed' by the New Morality and in 1940, after the capitulation of fallen France, Marshall Petain bewailed of 'dwindling numbers' as having been one of the contributory causes for France's humiliation in war. May not the apologists of restraints on woman's



conduct point to these historical parallels and hint at the possibility that woman's freedom may lead to a stationary and even declining population and thereby to political and military weakness in a world of competing sovereign States? Does not Socialist Russia provide another instance? The revolutionary upsurge at first permeated every aspect in the social-relations milieu. Overnight, a break with the nightmarish past was effected and woman's emancipation was consummated with a bang. The New Morality was intoxicating. In 1920 abortion was made legal. But by 1936 this zeal 'sagged' and, inspite of protests from women the code of family laws was substantially amended. In the planned drive for larger families, the Soviet State expects of her women "to fulfil their civic duty of child-bearing with greater assiduity than in the past." The Order of Heroine Mother was announced to be conferred on the prolific women. In the United Kingdom the continued stationariness of fertility and signs of its decline in the two decades before the war, the dislocation of family life during the war years, the problems confronting women disbanded from war and civilian work, have all led to the recent appointment of a Royal Commission on Population. In U. S. A. "the two-child family is now a prevailing social standard: but it is not enough, on the average, to perpetuate the race. Although the American population is not yet declining, the present increase is due only to increasing longevity. Given the present low birth-rate, a decline in numbers will inevitably set in between 1950 and 1980" (J. K. Folsom, *The Family and Democratic Society*, p. 188). In Great Britain the Report published in 1942 by the Royal Commission on the Geographical Distribution of the Industrial Population revealed alarming trends in Britain's birth-rate position. If birth-rate continues to fall as at present, a peak population of 48 million—hardly two million more than in 1946—will be reached in about two decades (Manchester Guardian, 22 May 1942). Since 1911, while the



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Number of children under fifteen years has been decreasing, people over 65 years of age have been increasing. A declining population is, without exception, an aging population. This is a disquieting trend. The family pattern itself has been changing. All these changes have been seen in all parts of the country and among all classes of people, with slight deviations in extent and pace, in the past three decades.

Thirty year period increase in the population of Great Britain (percentage) :

1821-1851—48

1901-1931—21

1909-1939—16

Over the past forty years in the United Kingdom, a social psychology has imperceptibly, nonetheless truly, set in, for a variety of reasons, which regards more than two or three children in a family unit as incompatible with economic resources and general happiness of a married couple. The natural result of this psychology has been that between 1931 and 1945 there has been no more than a five per cent growth in population. Between 1880 and 1945, the gross reproduction rate (fertility is best expressed so) has registered a 60 per cent decline from 2.28 to 0.90. While in 1939 children under 14 were 22 per cent of the total population in Great Britain, on the present showing, they will only be 10 per cent in 1970 and barely 4 per cent about 2000 A. D. (*Times*, leading article, 20 April 1942). "If fertility and mortality remain what they have been during the last 10 years, the proportion of young people will have been reduced by one-third."

The problem of a threatened decline in population confronts such western countries like U. K., France and Sweden, whose population figures have actually become stationary and not countries like India whose problem is not one of man-power shortage but of 'teeming millions.' How to reduce the increasing rate of population growth is our problem. France already has a declining population.



England is on the verge. The birth-rate problem is now common to western civilization itself. It has assumed such proportions that it can no longer be shelved. Our country, on the other hand, seems to be 'terribly full.' Our way of life is different and, let us admit, is one of abject ignorance. Here, all the causes, economic and social, that led to the widespread use of contraception and conscious limitation of family size in the west have failed to diminish the rate of procreation. For, brought up in our traditional, religious and ignorant ways, the very idea of consciously 'planning' the family size sounds blasphemous to our ears, for, can we dare negative the will of the Gods? If women's social freedom were to diminish the rate of growth of our population, it is a welcome effect.

Any attempt to extract a universal law from two or three such cases of parallelism or concurrence is clearly unwarranted. To seek to establish any casual connection between emancipation of women and decadence of society (from such isolated instances as of ancient Rome and Vichy France) is ridiculous. Maybe, the freedom of women has taken an unsocial turn in some instances, either in the direction of libertinism or towards aggressive feminism: maybe, some women, having grasped the fruits of individual liberty and social equality, have ignored their basic biological and other functions: maybe, they have become impatient of all social restraint: maybe, in certain instances, equality of women has led to a deterioration of the moral tone of the social structure as in France: but it is fantastic to argue from these that woman's emancipation and equality is one of the basic causes that have landed modern civilization in sore straits. Because woman's uncharted freedom has been abused in certain countries in the past or may conceivably be misused in future, to suggest that we should flash back to the old order of sex relationships is irrational and exhibits a lack of faith in human progress. If democracy has improperly func-



tioned in some countries,, if the recognition of the rights to free speech and expression has been abused by some unscrupulous people, does it follow that democracy and freedom of thought should be chosen for discard and are to be unceremoniously consigned to the muck-heap ? Let us recall to our mind the parable in the Gospel. When the boat was about to capsize, while cowards stayed on, St. Peter jumped out into the whirling waters of the sea : when he too was sinking, was he told that he was a fool to have left the sinking boat ? Was he not reminded that he was sinking because he had not sufficient faith in the wisdom of the step he had taken and was not striving his utmost to save himself ? If in the past, particularly in the West, freedom of women has led to certain undesirable consequences, it should not induce one towards a nostalgic backward glance to revert to the dead past : it should, on the other hand, serve as a spur to stronger faith and more determined reformatory efforts.

Look ahead and not back

The solution lies not in flashing back to the old order of things but in minimizing woman's cares, responsibilities and worries attendant on motherhood. Provision of maternal benefits, child welfare and health services, recreational and cultural facilities and other amenities, as of right, will be very helpful. Society should recognize woman's dual role—the biological function of motherhood and her active participation in social life as a free citizen. Neither should be secured at the expense of the other : for each is as important and complementary to the other. A fundamental change in social attitude towards woman's functions is necessary. The onus is clearly on the society to foster, and not to impede, the development of such a dual role. Motherhood may not be a natural instinct in woman. Neither reluctance towards maternity is natural or inevitable. It all depends on whether for the woman mother-



hood is a happy prospect to contemplate: society can contribute much in making the emancipated woman cherish motherhood with a feeling of pride. On the other hand, an unsympathetic and irrational society can generate *genophobia* in women—a dislike or shunning of children, an attitude of the mind which fears or shuns the advent of children. Emancipation of woman and her free participation in the affairs of the wider human world may in fact promote in woman a *genophilic* attitude if the community provides reliable prospects for the future welfare of children. If woman is assured of a happy and healthy home, motherhood holds no fears for the emancipated woman: on the other hand, love for children and an attitude of the mind that desires fuller family life is fostered (Dr. Spencer Paterson has coined these terms—*genophobia* and *genophilia*—*genophobic* and *genophilic*).

Are children important in married life? A recent investigation conducted in 1945 by Mass Observation in Great Britain revealed that, irrespective of the age group of the mothers and the period of their married life, eight or nine wives out of every ten believe that children are definitely important to the happiness of a couple (*Britain and her Birthrate*—The sixth of the 'Change' Wartime Surveys—p. 69). It is only the *tiniest* minority of males and females that have as their ideal the childless marriage. The same is true of every modern country and this is the silver lining to the population problem that can be converted to good use in attempts to arrest and reverse the declining trend. But it should be realized that children are not wanted beyond a 'reasonable' number; that they are wanted by the parents for personal happiness and not because of religious or governmental injunctions so that, unless the basic motivation of child-bearing is tackled, no social or governmental palliatives can substantially increase the average family size.

The Swedish way is an eye-opener

Swedish experience may have a lesson for others. In



1935 the Swedish Population Commission was appointed with a mandate by the *Riksdag* to suggest 'strong measures' to combat the problem of declining population. The Swedes have been for centuries the foremost exponents of woman's equality. The Commission, inspite of the threatened population decline, did not suggest restrictive measures, that women should be precluded from public work and employment. Taboos on free contraceptive knowledge were not favoured. The Swedish population policy is positive and is a family welfare policy : for they believe that woman's freedom has little causal connection with population stagnation. They go a step further—even if it were a contributory factor, woman's full and equal participation in public life being indispensable for the development of her personality in society, other measures and policies should be devised by the State to increase birth-rate. It would be foolish to throw out the baby with the bath. "Inspite of clear data showing a correlation between the working of wives and low fertility, which could be easily used as proof that the former caused the latter if the nation's ideology favoured such an interpretation, the new policy makes no effort to restrict mothers, or women generally, from employment" (Folsom, *The Family and Democratic Society*, p. 205). In fact, according to a law passed in 1939, no employer can discharge or reduce the pay of employees who have been in service for two years, on account of pregnancy or child-bearing or marriage. Thus even the employment of married women and of mothers is not discouraged. To induce women to rear larger families the Swedish method is not curtailment of their physical, intellectual or cultural freedom: Sweden's two-planked positive policy *vis-à-vis* woman comprises of sex equalitarianism and promotion of security and happiness in family life through the provision of educational, medical and health services ; recreational and cultural facilities, maternity and child-welfare benefits in cash as well as in kind.



Even in Great Britain, the decline in population growth is attributable to the desire of many women, particularly among the working classes, not to have large families. This desire issued mainly out of the 'appalling' housing conditions, unemployment and economic insecurity (Margaret Goldsmith, *Women at War*, p. 210). "Since the Great War" wrote no less an authority than Beatrice Webb, in her foreword to Richard Kathleen Titmuss's *Parents' Revolt* (1942), 'birth control has been practised by wage-earners, suffering from long periods of unemployment and under-employment so drastic that it seemed abject folly to produce children who could neither be adequately nourished nor sufficiently educated to secure a satisfactory livelihood.' Not the confinement of woman in an ignorant environment but the removal of social and economic deterrents to parenthood is the obvious remedy to the problem of population. Even accepting the volitional (as distinct from biological) hypothesis regarding the declining birth-rate, that the population decline is attributable to the increasing effectiveness and use of contraceptives, should not a study be made into the economic, sociological and psychological factors, that have induced women to avoid pregnancy? If the basic maladjustments underlying the deliberate control of reproduction are analysed, steps can be taken by the community to mitigate these social disequilibria.

Every thinking mother has this viewpoint uppermost in her mind—"I want my child to have something to hope for when he grows up." A faith in future is therefore to be instilled. This is more important than the mere immediate provision of maternity and child allowances. While the negative approach lies in weakening the feeling against the large family, which itself is necessary, more permanent results can be attained by the positive approach of strengthening the motive for having children. "For the eugenic future, something deeper is needed—something



which will make the thoughtful breed as much as the thoughtless, the well-nourished have as many babies as the under-nourished, the over-privileged as the under-privileged, the well-educated as those who left school at fourteen. A few extra shillings a week, an extra bedroom....these things may change decisions where the desire is there already and environment is at its worst....But for a quality nation the will to bring more children into the world must be stimulated where it is now weakest" (*Britain and her Birthrate*, op. cit., p. 207). It is not negative or repressive measures to suppress the present means of family limitation that should be adopted. They will be little effective, because it is the fundamental attitudes of the people that are to be tackled. Of course all measures should be taken to check and reverse the declining trend in fertility. The State cannot sit back and do nothing—*Laissez aller* is clearly not suggested. Some positive steps are needed to encourage fertility. It is to the economic resources and leisure available to the parents that we must turn our attention. 'Communalising' child care as in some countries of Continental Europe seems to be a short-cut: but like all short-cuts it has deep failings, if overdone. It is the wartime experience that children cannot be segregated from their parents for long without upsetting their moral and emotional stability. Of course, adequate provision of creches in work-shops, kindergartens, boarding schools, school midday meals, cheaper domestic service, are all wise steps. The granting of child allowances is a more ambitious scheme for making the arrival of more children in the household less unwelcome. For instance, in the Beveridge 'overall' Plan of social security, children's allowances are assigned a vital role. Education itself should be a means of popularising the large family, for ultimately it is the individual fathers and mothers that must develop more congenial attitudes towards large families. "In the long run,....any population policy,



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no matter how repressive legally or how generous economically, is bound to fail unless the claims and sacrifices involved in parenthood are voluntarily accepted as part of a pattern of private values and social relations consistent with the material environment of the twentieth century" (*The Population of Great Britain*, Mark Abrams, p. 40).

Woman and Society

While woman's individual personality has such definite claims on society, which society must realize or shall perish, woman herself should not pervert her freedom, should not 'go hang,' but should realize her responsibility towards society. Social progress has reciprocal claims on every individual member of the community. The modern woman should realize the importance of child-bearing, not only for ensuring the perpetuation of human society—(and in this world carved up into independent States, no State can be indifferent to dwindling numbers)—but for the success of her married life itself. "Marriage not only came into existence for the sake of the offspring but often becomes a lasting union through presence of children" (*Westermarck, A Short History of Marriage*, p. 299). Dr. Willcox estimates that in U.S.A. childless marriages are between three and four times as likely to end in divorce as marriages with children. Since 1900 the same tendency has been observed in France. Instances can be easily multiplied. Woman should not retreat from her social responsibilities. If women were to be swamped in mere pleasure-seeking megalomania, liberty will end up in libertinism.

Again, freedom itself will turn out to be a fool's-gold concept if improperly applied. "The achievement of freedom, though a matter of justice, is not the end of the journey" (*Mrs. Deighton Pollock, Women of Today*, p. 2). It is not so much the possession of a right as the use made of it that is of chief significance. It depends on how



Judiciously the power of choice is used. What for? is the basic question. Liberty and restraint : rights and duties : motivating energy and effective control : privileges and obligations go hand in hand. Woman should realize the need for accepting creative social restraints. Of what use is a great river to society if there are no dykes, no bridges, no dams, no quays? Such restraints are the essence of community living. While the individual personality of every single man and woman should be fostered by the group, every such single man or woman living within the community has reciprocal functions to discharge. These demands of society on the individual should not be whimsical or arbitrary or discriminatory ones but should be those subscribed to by the common will in the interests of promoting commonweal and social progress. It is to be emphasized that restraints on woman in society cannot be prescribed by men acting as law-givers but should be passed by men and women together participating in civic life as equal citizens. Nitzsche's penetrating distinction between 'freedom from' and 'freedom to' has great import. No one can be completely 'let alone' and all liberty that is not put to creative ends should be checked. Herein comes the need for power or authority in society. "I believe in Freedom because at the same time, I believe in Discipline (Havelock Ellis). Real freedom is not possible without power judiciously exercised. The harmonious blending of liberty and restraint is a very delicate task but there is no alternative. There is no short-cut to the attainment of the highest 'disciplinary self-expression of the person.' " Behind democracy is freedom but behind freedom is the self-control of persons. The basic platform of democracy is self-restraint." This self-restraint is symbolized in the law of the land. Woman's freedom, no less than man's, should be subject to this law which should seek to be expression of a universal conviction, recognition of universal capacity, bulwark of universal rights and the medium of common



good. "The outcome of such a legal theory, then, will be seen as the recognition of the individual, with this important proviso—the individual can be the possessor of no rights which run contrary to the common good" (Ralph Tyler Flewelling, *The Survival of Western Culture*, p. 54). Such a conception of law effects a happy blending of *universalism* and *particularism* and this is the surest path to human harmony and progress. Law is properly social and, specifically, may be defined as "the minimum of morality that is indispensable for life in society and is imposed by material sanctions" (Henri Berr, Foreword to '*Rome the Law-giver*,' J. Declareuil). There must be a sociological synthesis between authority and liberty. Authority should be legitimate: liberty must be rational, so that, law may become the 'organic—social expression of morality.'

Woman's zeal for her emancipation, equality and assertion of her individual personality must not stampede her into running amock. Liberty under law was the shield-motto of one of the earliest of the thirteen American colonies. What you want must synchronize with common good. It is only through 'purposive freedom' that personality is developed fully. While society should recognize the *purpose* or *teleology* of the individual person, the individual should realize the *entelechy* or *organism* of human society. Human society is not a mathematical quantity of distinct particulars as Malthus surmised. The tell-tale of human evolution is not exclusively expressed in Herbert Spencer's immortal phrase 'survival of the fittest,' but equally in Henry Drummond's striking variation of it 'the struggle for the survival of others.' Co-operation, not exclusiveness, is the basis of human civilization. Realization of personality is possible only in and through social progress. The flower yields its sweet honey to the bee: the bee furthers the propagation of the plant. Co-operation is the law of nature: selfish exclusion is the folly of man. Woman lives not in vacuum but in society. Let woman herself, as well



as society, realize the implications of this simple truth. In the 'little lives' which we lead as individuals, men and women must have mutual respect: 'in the common life which is real life,' men and women must be equal and active citizens.



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