

## WOMEN AND WHAT TO DO FOR THEM.

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The question will be asked how a contribution headed “Women and what to do for them” can be justified in such a religious Journal as the Siddhanta Deepika whose purpose to the world is solely to impart divine researches to the theistic humanity. The answer is quite plain. We do not stop with the common reconciliation which will be offered to this question that women form a portion of human beings equally fit to receive religious training as men and as such every facility as available for man ought to be made available for women alike. We go still further. Unlike other religions and philosophies, the Saiva Siddhanta is a practical religion which we live every day. No impracticable theories are propounded by this philosophy and the conduct of men towards women forms but a portion of the dictate of religion and a true Siddhanti is bound to give a religious aspect towards the treatment of the members of the fair sex, be the relation what it may.

The most lamentable condition in which we find women in this land makes us pause for a moment and think if there is a parallel to such a state of things in any other clime. Students of the social history of the world clearly tell us that in other continents women are treated with greater respect, that they are very carefully educated and that every effort is made to make their life as smooth as possible chiefly with the view that it is they who make the future nation of the world. Healthy and long lived children are required to constitute a powerful nation and this fact is not ignored by men, responsible citizens of the state and the rulers of countries offer their possible help towards the achievement of such objects. The Japanese continent exhibited to the world a few years ago the gallant bravery of woman-hood in the sincere and bold dispatch to the battlefield of every male relation in the family, and still more, in the heartfelt rejoicing by women when they heard of the news of the death of their kith and kin in the battlefield. Surely such a spirit in womankind is not at all a make of yesterday. Time alone must manufacture this spirit and conditions prevalent in the country must smoothly yield space for such a development.

What do we find in this land of whose ancestral civilization much is being boasted by the present day men? We do not hesitate to admit that in the matter of privileges extended to women there were many in the past ages which, for reasons which need not be explained here, were curtailed in course of time. Though we find women of eminence in literature, women who led highly religious lives – too high to admit of even one birth more in this mundane world – most painfully does it strike us to see around us our own sisters, wives and daughters immersed in ignorance, in matters material as well as spiritual. If we ourselves, who know our lineage, who have come to that stage of development whence we can try to know what God is and how to attain His grace, are instrumental in not aiding to uplift our women socially, morally, intellectually and above all religiously as far as lies in our power, we cannot reasonably justify our existence. In our daily life we hear it stated, and we ourselves observe, that seldom a husband and wife have both attained the same stage of advancement of thought. If this inequality exists in 90 cases out of every 100, the reason is

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plain that such a match has been ordained to raise the lower stage to a higher one. Such opportunities ought to be availed of instead of being neglected and that will be wisdom on the part of mankind.

Our women are kept in ignorance. Though the population of men who objected to female education two or three decades before is getting thinner, the number of girls who attend school is yet low. The impression that education to women is fraught with harm has almost been effaced and the substitution of female teachers in girl's schools has induced many a parent to send their daughters to schools. Yet there are many young girls in villages and even in towns who are not being educated. We do not advocate that our girls should necessarily have English education nor should they be compelled attendance at school even after they attain puberty. By all means give English education if possible but before you do so, see that all the excellent books in the mother tongue which preach morals, good womanhood, and other spiritual virtues are placed in their hands and studied to advantage. First make her an ideal of our home worthy of our ancient lineage and then, craving existing, give her the benefit of a foreign language and an idea of the civilization of the people who speak that language. As we said above, we do not insist on girls attending school after they come of age. It is rare that a girl is unmarried when she attains maturity. She soon after comes under the sway of her husband and it must be the duty of the husband to look to advance her knowledge from that time and see that her early education bears fruit in course of time.

Elevation of our women is also another item which should engage our attention. In matters affecting our family life, our women are never given an upper hand, much less, consulted in matters of domestic interest. Every question, we know, has two important sides and similarly every household has two important personages, the husband and the wife. A free discussion of things is what is wanted. The opinion, coming from an educated wife, must have some sanity about it and one cannot easily and totally reject it. Give all respect and due attention to it and come to a common understanding and you will have peace and harmony prevailing in your homes. Yet this is not what we find around us. How many instances do we unconsciously come across in which a wife is leading a separate life from her husband, not chaste very often? How many suits for maintenance do we read of in newspapers almost every day? How many murders do we find investigated by the authorities in Law Courts? Shall we not avoid all these by paying careful attention to our women?

We agitate for political reforms on the platform, we take pride in saying that we move in high circles when the head of a district or a province invites us to a garden party and shakes hands with us, we constantly write to newspapers advising this body and that to walk on the right lines, we at times go to the extent of advising mature minds even when their acts show high statesmanship, but of what use is all this when we ourselves do not know what our defects are both individually and collectively and set our homes right before we discuss of politics in Kamchatka and rebellion in Macedonia

Civilization is advancing by leaps and bounds; wonders such as railway, telegraphy, wire and wireless, telephones, steamships and airships, have all come into existence; dumb men are made to read and write in schools, things impossible are now presented before our

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eyes as possible, and one cannot see how such common things as education, elevation and freedom to our young women cannot be made possible to our home girls only if we have the will to give these to them. Let Heaven grant us the courage and resource to raise our women to that stage which they really deserve as makers of the future generation.

Good associations for ladies is an important factor which we must provide for. By bringing them into contact and by allowing them to express their opinions and discuss social questions, much good can result. Hundreds of men's meetings have been thorough failures; because the orators never had the cooperation's of their women when they went within their homes. Care should however be taken that, in Ladies Associations, advantage is not taken to admire the make of a particular jewel or the weaving of a laced saree – thus resulting in ladies cultivating envy and avarice and become an everyday burden to the husband or brother. Virtues and knowledge leading to improvement should be the chief aim of such associations and it would not be safe at this stage to leave such gatherings entirely in the hands of the members of the fair sex.

Members and sympathizers of the Saiva Siddhanta Mahasamaja really admire at the yearly conference the two eloquent lady speakers, Srimati Achalambikai Ammal and Srimati Andalammal, If these ladies have the enviable gift of a flowing talk, they have equally learnt to make a solid speech as well. Morals from *Periya Puranam* at every stage of a devotee's life and philosophy as expounded by the great sages of this school come pouring as if from a reservoir and one cannot see why ladies of this kind should not be many. Given the training and culture and freedom of thought, we are sure to have in our midst ladies of the type of Chandramati, Damayanti, and Savitri who represent typical wives and Karaikalammaiyar and Draupadi who represent typical women-devotees of the Lord.

The screw entirely rests in the hands of men alone and the future women will be made according to how the screw is turned. If religiously-by it is meant mentally, morally, intellectually and spiritually-we wish to keep our women at par with us, we will be only acting up to that chief dictate of religion that to love God is to love His children. Women are children of God as much as men and to find God in a woman as in a man would be quite in keeping with religion.

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