

THE STATUS OF WOMAN
IN HINDUISM
AS REFLECTED IN THE
PURĀṆAS, THE MAHĀBHĀRATA,
AND THE RĀMĀYAṆA

BY

MILDRETH WORTH PINKHAM, PH.D.

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY, IN THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY,
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P R E F A C E

*T*HIS DISSERTATION is part of a larger research in the same field, entitled *Woman in the Sacred Scriptures of Hinduism*, which covers the chief earlier sacred documents of Hinduism, namely, The Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Upanishads, and Laws of Manu. The entire bibliography, list of abbreviations, and index of the larger work are affixed to this dissertation. From a comparison of almost any individual passage with its full setting in its own original document the reader will perceive that very carefully selected material has been taken from a vast literary field. In this undertaking scrupulous editorial care has been exercised to present the quoted material in clear grammatical form. The reader will find certain variations of spelling, punctuation, and diacritical marks as used by different authors.

I desire to acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to Dr. Robert Ernest Hume, of Union Theological Seminary, for his continual intellectual stimulation. I wish to pay tribute to my teacher of Sanskrit, the late Professor A. V. Williams Jackson, formerly of Columbia University. Likewise I am indebted to Dr. Daniel J. Fleming, of Union Theological Seminary, for helpful criticism. To my beloved parents and husband I gratefully give thanks for their encouragement during this work. To my many friends in India, both Hindu and Christian, I wish to express appreciation for their interest in this study. I also desire to express grateful acknowledgment to the various publishers whose copyrighted material has been used in this book.

MILDRETH WORTH PINKHAM

New York City
February 10, 1941

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| AIL | Altindisches Leben, by Heinrich Zimmer. |
| ASL | A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, by F. Max Müller. |
| A.V. | The Hymns of the Atharva-veda, by R. T. H. Griffith. |
| B.Y.V. | The Veda of the Black Yajus School, Entitled Taittirīya Sanhitā, by A. B. Keith. |
| HMW | Hinduism and The Modern World, by K. M. Panikkar. |
| HOS | “Harvard Oriental Series.” |
| HSL | A History of Sanskrit Literature, by A. A. Macdonell. |
| HWI | Hinduism: the World—Ideal, by Harendranath Maitra. |
| ITPP | Indian Thought, Past and Present, by R. W. Frazer. |
| KP | The Key of Progress, by A. R. Caton. |
| PH | A Primer of Hinduism, by J. N. Farquhar. |
| PLMS | The Purāṇas in the Light of Modern Science, by K. Narayana-swami Aiyar. |
| PSIW | Purdah: The Status of Indian Women, by Mrs. Sarangadhar Das. |
| RRV | The Religion of the Ṛigveda, by H. D. Griswold. |
| RS | Recht und Sitte, by Julius Jolly. |
| R.V. | The Hymns of the Rigveda, by R. T. H. Griffith. |
| RVC | Religion in Various Cultures, by H. L. Friess and H. W. Schneider. |
| SBE | “Sacred Books of the East.” |
| SLAI | Sexual Life in Ancient India, by J. J. Meyer. |
| S.V. | The Hymns of the Sāmaveda, by R. T. H. Griffith. |
| TPU | The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, by R. E. Hume. |
| V.I. | Vedic Index, by A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith. |
| VM | Vedic Mythology, by A. A. Macdonell. |
| VR | The Vedic Religion, by K. S. Macdonald. |
| WLR | The World’s Living Religions, by R. E. Hume. |
| W.Y.V. | The Texts of the White Yajurveda, by R. T. H. Griffith. |

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| V. THE PURĀṆAS | 92 |
| <i>Popular Hinduism (early centuries A.D.)</i> | |
| VI. THE MAHĀBHĀRATA | 138 |
| <i>Popular Hinduism (1-250 A.D.)</i> | |
| VII. THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ | 167 |
| <i>Devotional Hinduism (about 1 A.D.)</i> | |
| VIII. THE RĀMĀYAṆA | 169 |
| <i>Popular Hinduism (1-250 A.D.)</i> | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 205 |
| INDEX | 231 |

CHAPTER V: THE PURĀNAS

THE Purāṇas, eighteen in number, are religious stories, or "ancient tales." They belong to what may be termed Popular Hinduism. In their present form they date from the early centuries A.D. Their importance as books of religious instruction is very great. Here again we find a similar combination of praise and blame for women. Persisting in spite of the prohibitions laid upon the feminine, however, we note the outstanding praise of goddesses, who in the Purāṇas occupy a position of great importance. The countenance of the goddess Kātyāyanī removes the grievances of the people. She is called the "Mother of the whole world" and is supposed to safeguard the universe.¹ Again and again goddesses are worshipped in order that they will protect and preserve the people from the fear of enemies. Earth is called "the nurse," the supporter and the nourisher of all creations.² The goddess Ambikā is revered by all the deities. The magnificent sages faithfully prostrate themselves to her.³ The goddess Nārāyaṇī protects things in a spiritual and material form. She is the over-ruling power of the universe, the auspicious bestower of prosperity, happiness, and every desire. She has power to create, to preserve, and to destroy. She is intelligence and excellence.⁴ Sarasvatī is very highly revered in the Purāṇas. In this goddess exists Brahmā in His one and in His many forms. Sarasvatī protects the universe; and in her are perceived all objects that are eternal. This lotus-eyed goddess is called the tongue of all.⁵ The great goddess Gāyatrī gives enjoy-

¹ Pargitser, tr., *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 91.2; p. 512; compare Dutt, p. 371.

² Dutt, tr., *Vishnu Purāṇa*, 1.13; p. 68.

³ Dutt, tr., *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 84.2,4; p. 347; compare Pargitser, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.8,9,10,21; pp. 371, 372; compare Pargitser, *op. cit.*, pp. 513, 515.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.30-37; pp. 111-13; compare Pargitser, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-28.

ment and emancipation.⁶ Gāyatrī is represented as the better half of the Lord, and that is why she appeared from His body. Brahmā and Gāyatrī are reported to be inseparable.⁷ The goddess Durgā is supposed to remove terror from every creature and to bestow a mind extremely bright. She dispels poverty and pain.⁸ Sandhyā is the goddess of prayer.⁹ Aditi is called the Mother of Gods.¹⁰ By worshipping the goddesses Mahālaksmī, Gaurī, Maṅgala, and Sarasvatī a man is assured of becoming an inmate of the celestial abodes and a learned man in his next birth.¹¹ The mantra sacred to the goddess Gaurī should be deemed the fulfiller of all desires; and it is believed that the man who worships such a goddess and stands a suppliant at her feet is sure to enjoy a hundred summers on earth. This worship of the goddess Gaurī is recommended to help a man retain his intellectual faculties in perfect vigor even to the last day of his life and to free him from depredations by thieves and freebooters.¹² It is written that porridge should be offered especially to the goddess Kālarātrī.¹³ Even when the sun was entirely covered with the massive folds of darkness, the goddess Kālī wandered about in the sky.¹⁴ It is written that there are thirty-two Divine Mothers who have been created by Viṣṇu from His body. They are all prosperous and fortunate, and are powerful enough to create and to destroy the whole universe.¹⁵ By means of worshipping the goddess Kuvjikā the gods conquered the demons and regained their lost kingdom of paradise with all its wealth and celestial weapons. Rohiṇī, the wife of Candra, should be worshipped.¹⁶ Śrī is the goddess of fortune.¹⁷ Satī is called the goddess who gives bliss, prosperity, and emancipation. The men and women who worship her with devotion are reported to obtain everything they desire.¹⁸ By worshipping and making obeisance to the gods

⁶ Dutt, tr., *Garuda Purāṇam*, 37; p. 89.

⁷ A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), tr., *Matsya Purāṇam*, 4.7-10; I, 13. "The Sacred Books of the Hindus," XVII.

⁸ Pargiter, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, 84.16; p. 485.

⁹ Dutt, tr., *Agni Purāṇam*, 116.1-26; I, 458.

¹⁰ *Vishnu*, 5.30; p. 395.

¹¹ *Agni*, 116.1-26; I, 460.

¹² *Ibid.*, 313.15-23, II, 1171.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 132.27-32; I, 531.

¹⁴ *Matsya*, 2.172.19; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 139.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.179.65,67; II, 156-157.

¹⁶ *Agni*, 183.15-18; II, 688.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 268.3-13; II, 989.

¹⁸ *Matsya*, 1.60.10-12; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 182.

and goddesses a man becomes the possessor of all wished-for objects in this life, and carries up the souls of his ancestors to the region of the god Brahmā.¹⁹ In the Vishṇu Purāṇa, Śiva is represented as “the God who springs from the forehead of Brahmā who separates into male and female.”²⁰

The idea of a goddess being the *Śakti*, or energy, of her husband took definite form in Hinduism. Farquhar maintains that “the god is conceived as retired, absolute, inconceivable: the goddess is a sort of emanation from him, bringing his power down to man, and is a much more approachable being than her lord.”²¹ The two great sects, the Vishṇuite and the Śivaite, held supreme place in the religion of this period. A third sect also arose,

. . . the *Śāktas*, or worshippers of Kālī, the wife of Śiva, as his *śakti*. They fall into two groups, the right-hand and the left-hand *Śāktas*. Both groups show many signs of aboriginal influence, notably animal sacrifice and magic rites; and the basis of the whole cult in both is phallic; but, while the right-hand group are respectable in their worship, the left-hand *Śāktas* are most immoral.²²

Professors H. L. Friess and H. W. Schneider state that

a wide-spread feature of popular religion from the earliest times among the natives of India is the worship of mother-goddesses. This phase of popular religion was rationalized in the Tantras, where the Devis, goddesses, were represented as the *Śaktis*, energies of the gods whose consorts they were. In the Tantras, too, a distinctive technique of worship was formulated making large use of quasi-mechanical means of inducing ecstasy. Thus interpreted and organized, Devi cults have become increasingly popular in modern times in certain parts of India, notably in Bengal.²³

It has been pointed out that in the popular Devī cults, Umā, or Pārvatī, daughter of the mountain, as Śiva’s consort “is mild and gracious, a heroic figure. . . . She is the mother of Skanda, the war-god, and of the elephant-headed Ganeśa. As Durga, the unapproachable, or Chandī, the wild one, or Kali, the black one, she

¹⁹ *Agni*, 116.1–26; I, 460.

²⁰ Aiyar, *The Purānas in the Light of Modern Science*, p. 181.

²¹ Farquhar, PH, p. 112.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

²³ Friess and Schneider, RVC, pp. 85, 88.

is a deadly scourge; but she is worshipped more in some quarters than Śiva himself.”²⁴ Sarasvatī is the consort and *Śakti* of Brahmā; Śrī, or Lakshmī, is the consort and *Śakti* of Viṣṇu. The Tantras, which are manuals of the *Śākta* cult, resemble the literature of the Purāṇas.²⁵

In order that the reader may catch the spirit of the abounding praise and respect accorded goddesses in the wealth of material on this subject in the Purāṇas, a few references will be given from the Mārkaṇḍeya, the Garuda, the Viṣṇu, the Matsya, the Agni, the Bhāgavata, the Brahma-Vaivarta, and the Srimad Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇas.

Pushkara said:—“O King, repeat every day, for victory in war and success in life, the prayer with which the god Indra propitiated and secured the good graces of the goddess Lakshmī.”

Indra said:— . . . “Salutations unto thee, O goddess, who dwellest in the bosom of thy beloved Viṣṇu! Thou art success, the Svāhā, and the Svadhā with which libations are poured on the sacrificial fire, the embodied image of two of the holiest Mantras of the Vedas, the nectar or the ambrosia that keeps up and nourishes all sorts of life. I make obeisance to thee, O goddess, who dividest the day from the night and the night from the day, as the rosy dawn and the golden eve. I bow down to thee, who formest the holiest functions of human frame and minds, such as beauty, memory, faith, speech, the supreme knowledge, the occult light, the sacrificial knowledge and the knowledge of the soul, and who as an ushering light of beauty and faith, leads the souls of men to salvation and freedom. It is thy divine self, O thou goddess of matchless beauty, which has been hymnised in the verses of the Ṛik-, the Sāman-, and the Yajur-, Vedas, and which forms the immutable truths of the Science of Soul and the fundamental principles of Criminal Jurisprudence. The Universe but shines with thy reflected light; and all beauty is but a borrowed gleam of thy divine effulgence. Who can cover the universe with a shroud of beauty, save thy honoured self? O goddess, who art the embodied image of all religious sacrifices, and in whose body the heart of the mace-wielding Nārāyana has built its nest of happiness and peace,—Nārāyana whom the minds of the Yogins cannot comprehend in their meditations! Forsaken by thee, the primeval night once again enveloped the face of this happy creation; and it is only through thy

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

²⁵ Farquhar, PH, pp. 113, 114.

favour, O goddess, that it has now been reinstated to light and joy. At thy gracious smile, wives nestle themselves round the neck of a man, children in the bloom and innocence of infancy sit smiling on his knees, friends flock at his gate, and plenty fills his stores and granaries. At thy blissful glance, the powerful antagonists of a man are scattered away like dry leaves before the winter wind; and health and prosperity become his portions in this life. What is there in this world which a man fails to acquire on whom your smile descends? O goddess, thou art the mother of all created beings, as the god Hari is their father; and thou fillest this universal space, O mother, with Vishṇu, thy consort. Never dost thou forsake, O thou who purifiest all things, my treasure, house, wearing apparel, wives, sons, friends, live stock and ornaments, O thou goddess of absolute purity, O thou who dwellest in the bosom of Vishṇu. Truth, fortitude, purity and good character leave a man, the moment thou forsakest such an unfortunate being; while in a single day, all those virtues again elevate him to godhead in life at thy gracious sight. The man on whom thy favour descends, is intelligent, erudite, brave, powerful and adorable, and is even honoured with the distinctions of high birth though born of a low parentage. O thou darling wife of Vishṇu, O thou who dost minister to the wants and woes of the universe, as a nurse doth to her infant ward, all these good virtues are counted as positive defects in a man on whom thou turnest thy back. Even the tongue of a Brahman cannot exhaust the countless boons and infinite virtues that constitute thy blessed self. Never forsake us, O thou goddess of lotus-like eyes."

Pushkara said:—"Thus hymnised by Indra, the goddess Lakshmi granted him the boons of perpetual sovereignty and victory in war. He who recites this psalm, or hears it recited by a Brāhmaṇa, becomes an emancipated spirit at the close of a prosperous career; and hence it becometh one to recite it constantly, or hear it recited by others." Agni 237.1-19; Dutt, II, 848-50.

The goddess adored in the three worlds, should be contemplated as possessed of a white complexion and seated on a full-blown lotus flower and carrying a rosary. The goddess should be invoked as follows:—"Om! Thou art the light, the sacrifice, the strength, the seventh sun, the abode of the gods. The universe is thy self; and thou fillest it with life and motion. Thou art the life of all and the duration of all lives. Om to the Earth! Come, O thou goddess, who grantest boon to thy votaries; and stay as long as I repeat thy holy name." Agni 215.31-34; Dutt, II, 773.

A picture of the goddess Bhadrakālī should be worshipped in the month

of Āśhvina, with a view to achieve success in all departments of life. . . . And the goddess should be addressed as follows: "O thou goddess Bhadrakālī! O thou Supreme Durgā! O thou goddess Durgā who deliverest all beings from dangers and difficulties! O thou the invincible energy presiding over the three worlds! O thou dreadful, undaunted energy of the supreme Absolute! Grant me victory." Agni 268.14-15; Dutt, II, 989.

From the mouth of the Supreme Being sprang a goddess very fair in complexion, holding in her hand a lute and a book. Her beauty vied with ten millions of moons; and her eyes were like spring lotuses. She was ornamented with gems. Her raiment was resplendent like fire. This goddess is the fairest of the fair. . . . She is the supreme mother . . . of the learned folks. . . . She is the tutelary deity of the poets, the presiding goddess of speech, and known by the name of Saraswatī. Brahma-Vaivarta, Brahma Khaṇḍa 3.53-62; Sen, I, 8.

Some hold there is one Brahma, the emblem of eternal light. Others hold, Brahma is of two kinds, Prakriti and Puruṣa. Those who hold that Brahma is one, maintain that Brahma is the cause of all and transcends both Prakriti and Puruṣa, both of whom emanate from Him; or, they maintain that the same Brahma willfully divided Himself into two parts. . . . Puruṣa is eternal; and so is goddess Prakriti. . . . They are the parents of the world. Brahma Vaivarta, Kriṣṇa Janma Khaṇḍa, 43.56-67; Sen, II, 293, 294.

The varied excellences of the goddess Caṇḍikā are praised.

We prostrate ourselves to Caṇḍikā. . . . Thou, healing from all kinds of disorders, givest pleasure and strength to all people. Those that desire to follow thee, shall not feel distress, but will be restored. . . . Thou art supremely exalted in the sciences, in knowledge, in wisdom, in eloquence, in virtuous practice. Mārkaṇḍeya 91.26,27,29; Dutt, p. 373.

Along with various positive and negative characterizations, the Ultimate is also known as a motherly source.

That which is the unmanifested Cause, is called subtle Nature [*Pradhāna*] by the foremost saints,—external, and instinct with cause and effect. It is indestructible, supportless, immeasurable, undeteriorating, real, devoid of sound and touch, and without form, etc. It hath three several modes; and is the mother of the Universe, without beginning, and is the end of all. Viṣṇu 1.2; Dutt, p. 6.

O Mother Universe! You are the refuge of all the Devas. Therefore, I

salute you. You protect all the *Jīvas* [living beings]; therefore protect me. . . . Even the four-faced Lord Brahmā does not adequately know your limit. . . . O, one without any beginning or an end, guard me from the perils of this vast and fearful ocean of the world. You are with Viṣṇu in the form of Lakshmī, with Śiva in the form of Gaurī, with Brahmā in the form of Sāvitrī. You are the light of the sun and the moon, intellect in Brihaspati. . . . O Mother! You are fixed. You pervade all the universe. Matsya 1.284.11–18; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 362.

The primeval masculine Creator is reported as having been unhappy in his solitude; and for that reason from his own self he created a beautiful woman, who is considered to be the equal of Brahmā.

Then Brahmā, in course of His practices, did not feel any comfort and happiness; for those (whom he had created), were single. He created a beautiful woman from His body. . . . She, by virtue of her austerities, equalled Brahmā, and was gifted with the faculty of the creation of the universe. Matsya 2.171.20–22; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 136.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa ²⁶ includes the appellation “Mother” as an appropriate designation for the Creator of the universe.

The Creator of the universe! Thou art the means of our existence. Thou alone art our Mother, rather the friend, the ruler, the father, and the best (true) preceptor. Bhāgavata 1.11.7; Chatterjee, p. 344.

According to this teaching the feminine is a worthy part of the Hindu’s conception of deity. Harendranath Maitra, in his idealistic interpretation of Hinduism, declares that “a religion that has no place for God as Mother will never take root in India.” ²⁷ This author continues with, “The Hindu thinks of God as Father, but the idea of Fatherhood is really absorbed in that of Mother as being deeper and tenderer. Mother is worshipped in India.” ²⁸ “The Hindus worship God in every relation, but most of all as Mother and Beloved.” ²⁹

Not all goddesses in the Purāṇas are appealing in appearance and activity or benevolent. Some terrible goddesses are besought to inflict their wrath upon enemies.

²⁶ Chatterjee, *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, p. 35.

²⁷ Maitra, HWI, p. 45.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

O thou goddess Cāmuṇḍā, who dwellest in the cremation-ground (of the universe), and who wieldest . . . a human skull in thy two hands. . . . O thou immense-mouthed goddess . . . whose laughter shakes the worlds in their orbits! . . . Advance, and advance, O thou goddess, whose jagged teeth cast down the gloom of night, and who art clad in an elephant-skin. Advance . . . with an extremely haggard and emaciated frame, and whose footsteps are followed by a concourse of many unearthly sounds. Advance . . . O thou supreme absolute monstress with a complexion like the flashes of heaven. Advance . . . with thy horrid teeth exposed in a demoniac laughter and thy bloody tongues protruding out of thy terrible mouth devouring fresh victims. . . . O thou goddess whose sullen look inspires terror in the breasts of all beings . . . and whose roar and battle-cry strikes terror into the breasts of all who hear them, show thy mettle. . . . Make thy weird laughter resound. . . . Accomplish this end of mine, O goddess, whose mouth vomits forth primal darkness through the interstices of thy horrible teeth, and who art the protectress from all banes and evils that beset our mundane existence. Soon and very soon accomplish this end. . . . Subjugate with thy mace all the forces of my enemy. Cut through . . . their ranks, O goddess. . . . Dance and sport in death. Shake and shake my enemies, and turn them topsyturvy. Kill and kill, O thou goddess, who dost fondly relish human flesh and blood. Trample down. . . . Pierce through. . . . Slay. . . . Chase, and pursue. . . . Fell to the ground the enemy, though bearing a charmed life, and possessed of a body hard as the bolt of heaven. . . . O thou goddess with eyes sunk in their sockets and a face resembling that of an owl, and a head rendered doubly ghastly by hairs standing erect on their roots! Burn . . . the enemy's forces. . . . Cook the armed hosts sent against me. . . . Overwhelm them. . . . Obstruct and impede the progress of the marching hosts; and break . . . their arms and weapons, O thou terrible looking goddess, with black serpents coiling round the body. . . . Break . . . their ranks, O thou who dost confound all order among the troops drawn up in circles and squares. And make all sorts of manoeuvres impossible. . . . Yell and yell, O thou goddess whose mouth vomits forth fatal fire. Undermine, tumble down and uplift the ground they stand upon. . . . Come, O thou goddess, whose thoroughfare is the heaven itself, cast thy noose and pierce with thy mace. Stop and enter (the line of the hostile armies). Paralyze their sense-organs such as the mouths, hands and feet. Cast a stupefying influence in all directions. . . . Stupefy all, either through ashes, drinking water, or through the subsoil. Agni 134.1-6; Dutt, I, 536, 537, 538, 539.

The association of womanhood with deification scarcely could be recognized in verses such as the following:

The fair sex is governed by desire. And women care much for pomp and pride. . . . Kings and persons ambitious of lofty stations in life, should not be excessively fond of female company. Agni 224.3-18; Dutt, II, 801.

A man should chastise his sons, brothers, cousins, wives and slaves with a strong string of thread or a rope made of the blades of Vena grass. Agni 227.46-50; Dutt, II, 815.

While his tender wife was exhausted with fatigue, . . . Viśwāmitra all of a sudden struck her with a chastising rod. Mārkaṇḍeya 7.59; Dutt, p. 30.

A king should never trust the ladies of the palace, especially those who are the mothers of children. Agni 224.33-42; Dutt, II, 803-4.

To the woman Tulsī, who is characterized as being beautiful but lustful, is credited the following condemnations:

No wise man believes a vile woman. Brahma-Vaivarta Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.41-51; Sen, I, 132.

The mouth of a woman rains honey; but her heart is like a jar full of poison. She uses sweet words; but her heart is keen like a razor. She has an eye constantly fixed on her own object on account of which she is submissive to her husband. Otherwise, she is disobedient. Her face is cheerful; but her mind is unclean. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.41-51; Sen, I, 132.

A woman sows the seed of quarrel. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.41-51; Sen, I, 132.

[A woman] is the embodiment of rashness and a mine of vices. She is hypocritical, recalcitrant and treacherous. . . . She is an obstacle to the path of devotion, a hindrance to emancipation. . . . She is practically a sorceress (a magician), and represents vile desire. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.52-60; Sen, I, 132-33.

In the lines from the Mārkaṇḍeya and Garuda Purāṇas given below, vigorous condemnation rather than deification of the feminine is expressed:

He who is known through himself, is fortunate. He who is known through his father or grandfather is middling. But the worst of all is the man

who gains renown through his mother or maternal relations. Mārkaṇḍeya 21.102; Dutt, p. 105.

No confidence should be reposed in . . . women. Garuda 109; Dutt, p. 320.

It is the absence of a nook of vantage, or the want of leisure, or of a person making love-overtures to her . . . that mainly accounts for the chastity of woman. Garuda 114; Dutt, p. 340.

The Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa depreciates women in the following terms:

Falsehood, vain boldness, craftiness, stupidity, impatience, over-greediness, impurity, and harshness are the natural qualities of women. Devī Bhāgavata 1.5.83; Vijnanananda, p. 17.

On the other hand, the Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa teaches the need of a discerning estimate of women. Not all women folk are reprehensible. Some are praiseworthy, while others are condemnable.

God has divided the fair sex into two classes, viz., those who are chaste, and those who may be easily seduced. The chaste woman is praise-worthy; the unchaste one should be condemned. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.61-72; Sen, I, 133.

The subservience of a woman to the wishes of a Brahman is commanded explicitly and unconditionally.

That Brāhmaṇa should be well fed and be devoutly looked upon as cupid . . . Each and every desire of that Brahman should be satisfied by the woman devotee. She should, with all heart and soul and with a smile on her face, yield herself up to him. Matsya 70.44,45; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 212.

An actual historical case is recorded in which a certain Brāhmaṇa in the city of Prathishṭhāna demeaned his wife. In this record also is to be noted the utter fidelity of the wife in spite of her harsh treatment.

Kauśika . . . in consequence of his pristine sins, was assailed by leprosy. His wife served her diseased husband as if he were a deity, by shampooing his feet and limbs, bathing him, clothing him, feeding him . . . by serving him in solitude, and treating him with sweet words. Although always

served by her with humility, that highly irascible and cruel (Brāhmaṇa) used to rebuke her angrily. Still the humble wife considered him as a deity, and regarded that horrible one as the best of men. Mārkaṇḍeya 16.14-18; Dutt, p. 79.

Adulterers are warned of dire punishment in several of the Purāṇas.

The man who would seduce the wife of a king, should be burnt alive in fire. Agni 227.58-66; Dutt, II, 818.

One who forcibly violates the modesty of an unwilling maid in the household, should be killed. Matsya 227.124; II, 246.

A man should not enter the female apartments, or treasure-rooms, of another man's house. Agni 154.13-31; Dutt, I, 596.

A man loses his caste by . . . adultery. Agni 168.28-38; Dutt, II, 644.

The souls of the crooked are cast into the hell of great conflagration (*Mahājvāla*); while those of persons who had visited the wives of their elders or superiors, or women who were in the forbidden degrees of consanguinity in life, are consigned to the torments of the saw-edged hell (*Krakacha*); while the begetters of hybrid children and the destroyers of other men's virtues, are punished in the hell of boiling treacle. Agni 203.20-23; Dutt, II, 729.

A good man, if he sees a virtuous woman alone, does not talk to her. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.41-51; Sen, I, 132.

Insult to women is indignity to Nature. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 1.139-50; Sen, I, 88.

There is no sin more dreadful than the violation of the chastity of one's preceptor's wife. Brahma-Vaivarta, Brahma-Khaṇḍa 10.44-55; Sen, I, 32.

The wife of a preceptor, the queen, the step-mother, the mother, the daughter, the daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law, the pregnant wife, the sister, the brother's wife, the wife of the maternal uncle, the paternal or the maternal grandmother, the mother's sister, the brother's daughter, the female pupil, the pupil's wife, and the wife of the son of the sister or brother are prohibited in the highest degree. Whoever goes to any of them for an immoral purpose, goes to his mother, and is guilty of a hundred Brahmin-slaughters. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 30.201-11; Sen, I, 171-72.

A person whose heart is set upon objects owned by others, particularly

the wives of others . . . apprehends danger at every step. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 35.87; Sen, II, 258.

O foremost of men! See those who ravished others' wives, killed by Yama's servants. Mārkaṇḍeya 14.77; Dutt, p. 71.

A man should not speak with another man's wife when forbidden to talk, nor should he commit adultery. Agni 227.40; Dutt, II, 815.

Incest likewise was forbidden.

One who commits incest with a daughter-in-law and a daughter is sent into *Mahājvāla* hell. Vishnu 2.6.12; Dutt, p. 131.

You have committed an incest on your daughter. Consequently, I forsake you, base and mean. And now go away on account of your doings. Matsya 1.48.53-56; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 143.

Having visited an unmarried girl, a *Chaṇḍāla* woman, one's own daughter, and the wives of one's *Sapiṇḍa* relations, a man should commit suicide. Agni 173.50-54; Dutt, II, 665.

Ravishers of their mothers are born as eunuchs in every birth. They are never redeemed. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 59.64-76; Sen, II, 334.

A daughter of Brahmā says to her father:

"A daughter has been classed among mothers, as stated in the Vedas. How is it that you, being the author of the Vedas, are about to ravish your daughter?" Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Khaṇḍa 35.47-56; Sen, II, 256.

There are passages in the Purāṇas that show consideration for a daughter.

The birth of a daughter is highly meritorious. Matsya 154.414-17; A Taluqdar of Oudh, (pseud.), II, 99.

My daughter is very dear to me; and I cannot make her feel hurt. Matsya 1.29.10; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 89.

The king was more attached to his daughter than to his sons. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa-Janma Khaṇḍa 41.111-25; Sen, II, 285.

Certain requirements on the part of the daughter are demanded for the happiness of her parents.

No progeny can be born without a woman . . . In the Śāstras at many places, it has been said, that a girl is equal to ten sons. If she is not modest

and good, she is the cause of pain to her people and is useless. The birth of such a girl who is a source of pain and disgrace to her parents is always repented and regretted. Matsya 2.154.156-164. A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 88-89.

There are many verses suggesting that a father should show great care in the selection of a bridegroom for his daughter.

One ought to marry one's daughter to a man who is well-qualified as regards his family, birth, age, beauty, good qualifications and wealth. Matsya 154.414-17; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 99.

A father gives his daughter to a suitable bridegroom. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 114.31-41; Sen, II, 507.

Anyone who gives his daughter to a man unqualified, old, ignorant, poor, foolish, deformed, wrathful, foul-mouthed, cripple, blind, deaf, dumb, paralysed, impotent, sinful, or recluse, is guilty of Brahmin-slaughter. Anyone who gives his daughter to a Vaiṣṇava well-talented, tranquil, learned and youthful, gets at once the benefits of ten grand horse-sacrifices. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.81-97; Sen, I, 134.

The father is relieved from anxiety by making over his dear daughter to a suitable bridegroom. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 4.1-12; Sen, II, 6.

Expression is given of the affectionate regard of a lonely father for a daughter who has been married and has left her father's home.

Himāchala felt very lonely and dejected in the absence of Pārvatī, as often is the case with the father of the bride. Matsya 154.497; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 103.

The selling of a daughter was forbidden.

Whoever sells his daughter in emergency or merely for the sake of filthy lucre, goes to the Hell . . . where he is bitten by crows and vultures. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 16.98-99; Sen, I, 134.

Whoever sells his daughter for gain dwells in the pit of flesh, and eats it for as many years as there are hairs on the skin of the body of his daughter. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 30.27-41; Sen, I, 166.

There is no salvation for the person who sells his sons or daughters. Agni 153.1-4; Dutt, I, 593.

A man loses his caste by . . . trading on the person of one's own daughter. Agni 168.28-38; Dutt, II, 644.

With regard to the liberty of a girl to choose her own husband the Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa says:

A girl should never of her own accord solicit a husband. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 114.31-41; Sen, II, 507.

Yet other Purāṇas do allow a young woman to choose a husband.

A girl is at liberty to make her own choice, and to be united with a husband, in the absence of any such relation to give her away in marriage. Garuda 95; Dutt, p. 268.

A king should not punish a girl who chooses her own husband according to the rites of a Gāndhārva marriage. Agni 227.40-45; Dutt, II, 815.

A girl who desires to marry a high class man should be given to him in marriage; and after marriage if the girl be confined in the house, she would remain all right. Matsya 2.227.130; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 246, 247.

Both the Garuda and the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas say that a girl should be given only once in marriage:

A girl should be given only once in marriage and anyone carrying away a married girl should be dealt with as a common felon. Garuda 95; Dutt, p. 268.

Where a man, after having given his daughter to someone, gives her to a second person,—truly that man is thus divided into many portions, and swept along in a stream of burning corrosive. Mārkaṇḍeya 14.68; Paragiter, p. 81.

It is the father who gives his daughter in marriage; and after that she is to remain faithful to her husband.

A girl shall be clean in body and spirit, frugal in her expenses, and faithfully nurse the man she has been given to by her father in marriage. Agni 222.19-23; Dutt, II, 795.

Although the importance of marriage for daughters is greatly emphasized, nevertheless the Purāṇas contain evidence that not all daughters were married.

The king, hearing . . . that his daughter had no intention to marry . . . began to pass his time without giving away his daughter in marriage. Thus the daughter lived . . . protected by her father and mother. *Devī Bhāgavata* 5.17.27-31; *Vijñanananda*, p. 412.

Among the persons who ought to be invited to the feast of *Naimittika Śrāddha* (that is, for the deceased forefathers), a daughter's son was included.

It should be noted what class of people ought to be invited to the feast of *Naimittika* . . . especially a daughter's son. *Matsya* 1.16.5-13; *A Taluqdar of Oudh* (pseud.), I, 49.

A daughter's son had the power to save his grandfather through religious ministrations upon the latter's death.

That high-souled *Yayāti* in this way, through his magnanimous daughter's sons, was saved from fall; and after leaving the earth, that doer of great charitable deeds rose to Heaven, filling the earth with his renown. *Matsya* 1.42.28,29; *A Taluqdar of Oudh* (pseud.), I, 112.

The reward of performing the ceremony to the deceased forefathers, was that the man would obtain many daughters as well as sons and would become prosperous.

The performer of the ceremony [*Śrāddha*] becomes the father of many sons and daughters, thrives in trade and agriculture, and the tenantry prospers in his estate. *Agni* 163.28-39; *Dutt*, I, 628.

Despite these expressions of esteem for daughters, there are passages which show that daughters were not desired.

Absurd is the lasting good name of a house in which female children are born. *Garuda* 110; *Dutt*, p. 325.

A man is at liberty to marry a second wife . . . after eleven years of the marriage of a wife that has given birth to daughters only. *Garuda* 115; *Dutt*, pp. 351, 352.

It is to be noted that although an especially religious man prays for a beautiful wife and many sons and grandsons, yet in his prayer he expresses no desire for daughters or granddaughters.

May I be blessed with a beautiful wife and sons and grandsons in large numbers. *Agni* 209.55-63; *Dutt*, II, 746.

Not only the desire for sons but also the absolute necessity of having a son for the salvation of both a father and a mother is stated definitely.

Whoever is unmarried and void of sons . . . commits the . . . sin (Brahmin-slaughter). Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 30.160-71; Sen, I, 170.

There is no prospect in the after-birth of the sonless. Never, never will Heaven be his. Without son, there is none other who can be of help in the next world. Devī Bhāgavata 4.15-27; Vijñanananda, p. 9.

The sonless can never go to the Heavens; so he must get a son somehow or other. Devī Bhāgavata 2.6.36-48; Vijñanananda, p. 96.

The life of a woman who has no son, is useless. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 2.16-31; Sen, II, 4.

Asceticism and charity yield fruits which are reaped in the next world. But the birth of a good son, i.e., a son of noble blood, gives happiness in this world, as well as in the next. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 2.16-31; Sen, II, 4.

Śaturpā, the barren wife of Manu, lamented:

“Unless I get a son, I will take poison or enter into the flames.” Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 5.1-12; Sen, II, 8.

There is a very interesting tale concerning a certain king and his wife, who, failing to have a son, treated a daughter much as if she were a highly prized son.

With a desire to get a son; he [King Rabhya] made many presents. . . . When copious quantities of ghee were offered as oblations, there arose, from the fire, a girl beautiful in all respects. . . . The priest . . . presented her to the King, and said . . . “Take this girl, resembling a son, and be happy.” . . . The King . . . went to his wife Rukmarekhā, and said . . . “Take this daughter.” The Queen . . . felt the pleasures of having a son when she got in her arms that lotus-eyed beautiful daughter. The King next performed the natal and other ceremonies of the daughter, and did all other acts as if she had been a son to him. . . . That beautiful girl was nursed and cared after like a son. Devī Bhāgavata 6.21.32-53; Vijñanananda, pp. 558, 559.

A woman's joy in her husband and son is voiced in the following verse from the Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa:

"I am as much pleased as a woman who sees her husband after a long course of separation, or as a woman who sees her only son returning home after years." Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 9.28-37; Sen, II, 22.

Much as a son is to be desired by a Hindu woman, nevertheless, her superior commitment is to her husband.

So there is none dearer than the husband to a woman. A son is dear to her, as he is the offspring of her husband. The husband is dearer to a woman than a hundred sons. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 42.18-30; Sen, I, 203.

The Purāṇas teach, however, that a woman should recognize virtue as superior to a husband and sons.

A husband is, indeed, greater than the son. But virtue is greater than the husband. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 7.36-46; Sen, II, 14.

A reciprocal devotion to the mother is demanded of a worthy son.

A worthy son should not abandon his mother. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 16.20-32; Sen, II, 33.

Not only sons but also grandsons are included in the religious life span. It is to be noted also that the following passage continues the teaching found in the Laws of Manu (6.2-3; SBE, XXV, 198-99), namely, that the wife may accompany her husband when he resorts to the forest.

A house-holder having seen the birth of his grandson (a son's son) should resort to the forest. He may do that . . . either alone or in company of his wife. Agni 160.1-5; Dutt, I, 617.

The killing of a woman is forbidden.

A man loses his caste by killing . . . a woman. Agni 168.28-38; Dutt, II, 644.

The destroyer of a woman or that of a child is born as an earth-worm. Mārkaṇḍeya 15.18; Dutt, p. 73.

Under no circumstances is a woman to be killed. Matsya 1.47.106; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 130.

Not only should women not be killed but also the Purāṇas say that they should be protected.

Women should always be protected with care; never to be killed. Devī Bhāgavata 7.25.57-77; Vijnanananda, p. 679.

The ladies of the palace should be protected and served. Agni 224.33-42; Dutt, II, 803.

The king and the virtuous should protect the faithful wives; and they in their turn should help their husbands in matters of housekeeping. Agni 222.19-23; Dutt, II, 795.

A wise man preserves his youthful wife more carefully than his life. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 114.64-71; Sen, II, 509.

The father of a woman shall protect her in her infancy; the husband, in her youth; and her son, in her old age; in absence whereof the duty of maintaining her shall devolve upon his friends and relations. Day and night, a woman shall not quit the side of her husband. Garuda 95; Dutt, p. 271.

The same teaching as that in the previous passage has already occurred in Manu (9.3; SBE, XXV, 328).

Along with remorse for the wrongs done in war to the many persons who are involved, King Yudhishtira expressed concern for the tragic plight of women in war.

Not by any course of duties [*karma*] laid down for a house-holder [*gṛhastha*] shall I be able to expiate what sin has now accrued to me in respect of women whose relations were slain by me. Bhāgavata 1.8.51; Rau, I, 44.

In the Matsya Purāṇa it is gratifying to note that even enemy women are to be spared.

If thou art angry with male population hostile to thee, what is the fault of the women? Why art thou enraged with the women? . . . Hast thou not heard commonly said in the world that the women of the enemy should not be killed? Matsya 2.188.41-48; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 180.

There are instances in the Purāṇas where women are bracketed with Śūdras.

A man having accidentally killed his chaste and innocent wife, should

practise the penance similar to what has been prescribed for the murder of a Śūdra. Agni 173.13–18; Dutt, II, 660.

Even women and Śūdras are admitted to the privilege of practising the vow. Garuda 119; Dutt, p. 359.

The following words also occur.

Anyone who knows the rule of righteousness does not kill a dunce . . . or a woman. Bhāgavata 1.7.36; Rau, I, 35.

The murderer of a child, a woman, or an old or imbecile person, is chained down to the bottom of the hell, known as the Raurava. Agni 203.20–23; Dutt, II, 728.

There are verses in the Purāṇas which teach that in the higher stages of religious knowledge wives and all worldly attachments are only temporary and that they really contribute to the misery of mankind.

Non-attachment to one's sons, wives and domestic affairs . . . are but the components of right perception or knowledge. Agni 362.19–27; Dutt, II, 1336.

Wives, children, friends, and relations are but the passing shadows in the phantasmagoria of life. Garuda 115; Dutt, p. 348.

Wife, children, servants, houses, lands, riches, contribute much more to the misery than to the happiness of mankind. Viṣṇu 6.5; Dutt, p. 444.

A high status for women was not encouraged by those authors of the Purāṇas who gave to the Hindu people a description such as the following concerning one of their most powerful gods:

She was horrified by the cruel Indra who also beat her and subjected her to great troubles, as one would do unto a helpless woman without a lord. Matsya 147.10–15; II, 55.

On the other hand, we must note in the Agni Purāṇa that though sometimes little value would seem to be placed upon woman yet the face of a woman is considered always pure.

The face of a horse or that of a goat is always pure; and likewise the faces of a woman, calf, bird, and a dog are always pure. Agni 155.1–10; Dutt, I, 599.

Also consideration is shown for the pregnant woman.

The seat, bed, marriage, wife, son, and alms-bowl of one's own are always holy. . . . A man should give way to a venerable person, a pregnant woman, or to a person carrying a heavy load, if come across on the road. Agni 154.13-31; Dutt, I, 596.

This Purāṇa also condemns the man who speaks disrespectfully of women.

A man loses his caste . . . by mixing with men who speak irreverentially of women. Agni 168.28-38; Dutt, II, 644.

Passages concerning widows are to be found in the Purāṇas.

The widow who practises self-control and austerities after the death of her husband, goes to heaven. A widow shall never feel any inclination to dwell in the house of a stranger, nor should she be querulous in her disposition. A widow as well as the wife of a man who is absent in a distant country, should never decorate their persons, and live in a temple and worship the gods for their husband's good. A wife in the latter case shall wear a few ornaments for the good of her husband. Agni 222.19-23; Dutt, II, 795-96.

A widow should not anoint her body with oil. She should not see her face in the looking-glass or behold the face of any other man. She should not witness an opera, dance, a grand festival or see the face of a dancer, a singer or a well-dressed man. She should always listen to pious narratives. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 83.102-24; Sen, II, 407.

A Brahman is warned not to eat food offered by a childless widow:

A Brahman who . . . eats food offered by a childless widow commits Brahman-murder. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakṛiti-Khaṇḍa 30.172-82; Sen, I, 170.

We have evidence that the advice of the sage Aurva prevented a pregnant woman from performing *Satī*.

When her aged husband died, she prepared herself to die with him, but by the sage Aurva who knew her to be pregnant, she was prevented (from the act). Bhāgavata 9.8.3; Rau, II, 134.

Yet on the other hand there is evidence that a woman performed *Satī* even when she was leaving a mere boy an orphan. The boy Paraśurāma says:

My mother died on the funeral pile of her husband. I am now an orphan. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 30.7-20; Sen, II, 57.

The Devī Bhāgavata declares:

Those who are born . . . of widows . . . are always to be avoided. Devī Bhāgavata 3.27.2-3; Vijnanananda, p. 230.

Widows are urged not to marry.

She who does not take a second husband after the demise of her first one, achieves fame in this life, and lives in the same region with the goddess Umā in the next. Garuda 95; Dutt, p. 269.

Men are warned not to marry widows:

Those who passed their days as the husbands of widows are reduced to those worms that are being eaten up by ants. Mārkaṇḍeya 14.83; Dutt, p. 71.

In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa we find a lengthy instance of *Satī*.

That great Queen Archis, his devoted wife . . . followed him to the forest, though very delicate and not fit to go into the forest. . . . On observing the body . . . of her own beloved Lord, completely destitute of life, consciousness, etc., the true wife wept over it but for a short time, and soon caused it to be placed on the funeral pile of fuel on the high edge of a hill. Having performed appropriate rites, she bathed in the waters of the river, and poured libations to her Lord of noble deeds, and then bowed to the gods in heaven witnessing from the sky, she thrice went round the pile, and contemplating her Lord's feet, threw herself into the fire. On seeing the chaste Archis follow Pṛthu, her Lord, . . . thousands of Goddesses with their consorts sang her praises. . . . They showered down flowers . . . and talked to one another in praise of her, while the celestial trumpets were blowing. The Goddesses said, "What a blessed wife is she, who with a full heart has followed the king of kings even as the goddess Lakshmī sought the Lord of sacrifices (Nārāyaṇa). This worthy lady certainly goes to higher regions by following her lord. See! Archis passes beyond us by virtue of her dutifulness." . . . He who with faith and attention reads this holy account to himself or to others or listens to it, would attain to the path of Pṛthu. Bhāgavata 4.23.19,21,22-23,24-26, 31; Rau, I, 142-43.

With regard to the subject of *Satī*, such scriptural support as Hinduism gave the rite is mainly in the Purāṇas. Edward Thompson says:

Suttee was for the aggrandizement of the husband, who took with him when he died the most valuable and personal of his possessions. . . . We

may look on suttee as almost inevitable from the premise of Hindu sociology and religion, that the husband stands to the wife in place of the Deity. Suttee, this surviving root from the darkest ages of savagery, was bound to blossom and fruit terribly, for a host of subsidiary considerations fed it. Families boasted . . . of their suttees, and tried to surpass rival families. Jealousy made an old man unwilling that a young and lovely woman should survive him. . . . Sordid greed—desire to avoid sharing a dead man's possessions with his widow—was considered by Rāmmohan Roy one of the causes that led to the increase of suttee in Bengal over a century ago. Hindu writers commonly blame Mahomadan lawlessness; women were unsafe, and it was best to preserve their honour by burning them when their protectors died. . . . But the main source of encouragement lay deeper than greed, deeper than even glorification of man. Hindu theology, with its doctrine of retribution pedantic in its exactitude, proved the woman left a widow a sinner whose previous life had brought upon her in this one the heaviest of all punishment in the loss of her visible God. Widowhood, then, must in rigorous justice be an experience so desolate and crammed with misery that it was better to perish in the flames that consumed the husband's corpse. . . . The widow who mounted the pyre passed from the condition of a sinner to one of beatification; her dying curse or blessing had absolute power and unfettered course. After her death prayers were made to her manes, and those prayers were sure of fulfilment. Her dying redeemed her ancestors from hell; and she enjoyed everlasting communion with her lord. . . . Everything conspired to point the widow along one path—that which led to the red glow of the funeral pyre.³⁰

The custom of *Satī* seems to receive sacred sanction in the Purānas.

The princess again followed him in death, and in agreement with sacred precepts once more mounted cheerfully his funeral pyre. Vishṇu 3.18; Dutt, p. 235.

Where is that intelligent lady, fit to be adorned, who wants to live even for a moment as a widow which makes her unadorned and look low in the eyes of the people? Matsya 2.210.21; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 214.

As the body of her husband together with the hut is being consumed by the fires, the virtuous wife Gāndhārī standing outside, will enter into that fire to follow her Lord. Bhāgavata 1.13.57; Rau, I, 70.

³⁰ Thompson, *Suttee*, pp. 46–50.

It is stated that a woman will go to heaven if she burns on her husband's funeral pyre.

The widow who burns herself in the same funeral pyre with her husband also goes to heaven. Agni 222.19-23; Dutt, II, 796.

It is very remarkable that the poets allow a woman the power to save her husband, yea even a wicked husband.

If a woman enters into fire with her husband, she reclaims him, even if he be guilty of Brahmanicide, ingratitude, or of other vile iniquities. Garuda 52; Dutt, p. 142.

Today medical men and women in India continually have to combat many harmful features of the ancient Hindu system of medicine. A large part of the population still treat disease as produced by an asterism or some earthly omen. Certainly the study and practice of medicine should not be hampered by ignorant fanaticism. The Purāṇas contain medical advice which may be of value for the cure of children having certain ailments. It is lamentable, however, that there are not more words of advice on child care direct from Hindu mothers in this period of Hinduism. Their words on the topic of health might have been of great value. Just how valuable most of the priestly writers' words on child care were may be deduced from a few of the following examples:

A child is subject to be possessed by the monstress Kākōlī on the fourth day of its birth. The disease is marked by such symptoms, as the jerking of limbs, loss of appetite, foaming at the mouth, and upturned position of the dilated pupils. The remedy consists in smearing the body of the child with an unguent, composed of the scrapings of ivory, the cast-off skin of a snake, and the urine of a horse. Agni 299.5-9; Dutt, II, 1106.

The virtue of a topaz consists in removing the sterility of a woman, and in crowning her with the glory of maternity. Garuda 74; Dutt, p. 203.

A paste of Śringī and Ativisha mixed with honey, or honey and pulverized Ativisha alone, should be applied on the tongue of a child suffering from cough, catarrh or from inflammatory fever incidental thereto. Agni 283. 1-4; Dutt, II, 1038-39.

Kaśyapa . . . began to counsel his wife how a pregnant woman should live. . . . A pregnant woman should not often go and sit at the root

of a tree, nor should she sit on a broom-stick or a pestle. She should not enter or plunge herself in deep waters, and should also avoid living in a solitary house, sitting upon an ant-hill, and also depression of mind. She should not write by her nails, charcoal or ashes, on the floor, and should avoid much sleeping and labour. She should also abstain from sitting in a place covered with coal, chaff and bones, as well as from quarreling and yawning. She should not keep her hair unkempt, nor her person unclean, nor should she sleep with her head towards the north. She should never doff her garments, and should not allow her mind to be afflicted or her feet to remain wet. She should avoid much laughing and the use of inauspicious words. She should serve her preceptor, do pious deeds, and bathe in lukewarm medicated water. She should take great care of herself in every way, should wear fine ornaments, worship Vāstu (household deity), keep herself pleased, and devotedly serve her husband. She should give alms to the poor, and worship Gaurī (the wife of Śiva) on the third day of a bright fortnight. A woman, and particularly one who is in the family way, if she follows such a course, begets amiable, valiant, and long-lived children; otherwise there is always a danger of miscarriage. Matsya 1.37-48; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 24, 25.

A repetition of the Rikrunning as "Pramandina; etc.," ensures the safe delivery of a woman undergoing the travails of childbirth. Agni 259.27-32; Dutt, II, 946.

A woman suffering from incessant miscarriage . . . should bathe an image of god Vishṇu placed on a lotus-flower. A woman whose issues die in childhood, should perform the rite under the boughs of an Aśoka tree. Agni 265.1-4; Dutt, II, 980.

It is evident that much magic has been handed down in the Hindu scriptures; but often true nobility of character and profound thought are to be noted in the same document that contains magic.

The Purāṇas expound upon the signs of the Zodiac and other omens, which are supposed to affect the problems of women.

A married couple whose natal stars stand in the relation of Samasaptaka becomes fondly enamoured of each other. But a marriage can be safely contracted or celebrated where the Kṣetrapatis or the presiding planets at the nativity of both the bride and the bridegroom are friendly towards each other or stand in the relative positions of Dvidadasha and Tricone towards each other. The effect of such an union is prosperity in the married life, even if the stars be otherwise hostile. Marriage between a pair

whose stars stand in the relation of Shaṭaka or Ashtaka towards each other is always prohibited, like an inauspicious marriage celebrated at the setting of Venūs or Jupiter, as the effect of such an union would be the death of both the bride and bridegroom. A marriage ceremony gone through when the sun is in the house (Kṣetra) of Jupiter or in the event of the latter being within the mansion of the former is attended by the widowhood of the bride. The celebration of a marriage ceremony should be postponed for three weeks or four months as the case might be in the event of any planet hastily leaving any particular sign of the Zodiac (Atichāra) or gradually receding from its position. A penance or marriage ceremony is strictly forbidden when Jupiter takes the above-said movements. Similarly a marriage ceremony should not be celebrated in the months of Pausha and Chaitra or on the days of the lunar month known as the Riktā (except such days being Saturdays) nor when the god Hari would be enjoying his yearly sleep, nor on Tuesdays and Sundays, nor on the night of the new moon. But the evening is always auspicious, as then no stars exert their baneful influence. Marriage ceremonies should be celebrated under the auspicious influence of the asterisms such as the Rohiṇī, the Uttarās, the Mūlā, the Hastā, the Revatī, and when the sun is in the zodiacal signs of Libra or the Gemini. Agni 121.1-8; Dutt, I, 482-84.

The number of letters composing the names of both the man and the wife should be multiplied with the number of their Mātras and divided by four. The quotient, if even, would indicate the birth of a male child, while an odd quotient obtained in the aforesaid way would indicate the birth of a female child. Any remainder being left in the latter case would predict the death of the wife before that of her husband, while the one remaining in the former instance would foretell the survival of the wife. Agni 141.3-5; Dutt, I, 553.

Obeisance to the goddess Vajraśṛiṅkhalā! . . . Drink the blood of my enemy out of the cup of a human skull. . . . Obstruct the eastern quarter of the sky, O thou goddess with bloodshot eyes, besmeared with ashes, clad in bloody clothes, and equipped with the bolt of thunder! . . . Keep in control the demon-world. . . . O thou goddess of mighty prowess . . . who art encircled by a wall of liquid thunder dripping down from thy dishevelled hairs . . . protect me from all malignant stars and planets! Protect me from (the influences of) all diseases; keep me secure from the infinite harms and evils that beset human life. Agni 141.9-20; Dutt, I, 555, 556.

A woman named after an asterism, a plant, or a stream . . . should be deemed as a curse. Agni 244.1-6; Dutt, II, 884.

A woman whose small toe does not touch the ground, should be shunned as death. Agni 244.1-6; Dutt, II, 884.

In certain places we find that a high ethical standard is taught for estimating women.

Beauty and good character become a cause of happiness; for that reason she who is without character, is to be forsaken. Mārkaṇḍeya 69.34; Dutt, p. 295.

A woman . . . fond of quarreling with her neighbors or relations, or excessively greedy, or foul-mouthed, should be deemed as a curse. Agni 244.1-6; Dutt, II, 884.

A woman conversing with a person at a forbidden place, and on a forbidden topic, should be liable to a fine of a hundred paṇas, while a man found guilty of such an offence, should be punished with a fine double in value of the latter. Agni 258.68-71; Dutt, II, 941.

An unchaste woman has no place beneath the face of the sun. Everyone is released from his sins after his sufferings. But an unchaste woman is never released, so long as the sun and the moon exist. . . . All the sins of the world dwell in an unchaste woman. There is no sin greater than she. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 23.25-36; Sen, II, 201.

The life of an unchaste woman in India is quite useless. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 23.37-49; Sen, II, 202.

An unchaste woman . . . is a blot on her family. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 23.78-91; Sen, II, 203.

Warnings against the unchaste woman are numerous and explicit.

No wise man believes a vile woman. No one is her friend. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakṛiti-Khaṇḍa 16.41-51; Sen, I, 132.

A man who eats food cooked by a prostitute . . . commits the sin of the murder of a Brahman. Brahma-Vaivarta, Brahma-Khaṇḍa 16.43-52; Sen, I, 53.

A man should not eat the boiled rice . . . prepared by a public woman, . . . a woman who lives with her paramour . . . a ballet dancer . . . a corrupt woman. Agni 168.1-12; Dutt, II, 641.

If such a person is again found talking to women, he should be fined a tola of gold or silver. But there is no serious crime in talking to actresses in private, or walking with them in private; for, it is their profession, and they should therefore be fined something for doing so, for they earn their livelihood by prostituting their bodies. *Matsya* 2.227.122-23; *A Taluqdar of Oudh* (pseud.), II, 246.

Only an unchaste woman troubleth her husband; a chaste woman doth not. *Brahma-Vaivarta*, *Brahma-Khaṇḍa* 6.36-46; *Sen*, I, 17.

An unchaste wife is troublesome to her husband like his enemy. A woman of sharp tongue and a woman of bad character are both unchaste. *Brahma-Vaivarta*, *Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa* 2.16-31; *Sen*, II, 4.

The wife who wantonly breaks faith with her lord, should be caused to be torn to pieces by dogs specially trained for the purpose. *Agni* 227.40-45; *Dutt*, II, 815.

A scolding wife, wild, querulous and argumentative is but the blight of life. A wife, attached to another and fond of staying in another man's house, and who is not ashamed of her own depravity, is but the curse of life. A wife who appreciates and honours the good qualities in her lord and lives in loving submission to his wishes, is satisfied with the little she gets, is alone entitled to be called a beloved. An unchaste wife, an insincere friend, an argumentative servant, and a residence in a snake-infested chamber, are but the preludes of death. Walk not in the paths of the wicked; but sit in the assembly of the pious and the godly. *Garuda* 108; *Dutt*, p. 317.

Nevertheless, a wife, even though she be of bad character, must not be left unsupported by her husband.

As the wife must be favourably disposed towards the husband if he be of bad character, similarly is the wife of bad character to be supported (by the husband). *Mārkaṇḍeya* 69.59; *Dutt*, p. 297.

A chaste wife is highly praised in the *Purāṇas*. Under no circumstances is she to be forsaken.

He who forsakes a chaste and undegraded wife in her youth, is sure to incarnate as a woman, and to suffer the pangs of widowhood in his six successive rebirths. *Garuda* 107; *Dutt*, p. 313.

The fire and the sun, though they are foremost of the effulgent, cannot

even hold candle to a chaste woman in point of lustre. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 44.11-27; Sen, II, 89.

Polygamy appears in the Purāṇas.

Pāṇḍu had another wife named Mādrī. Vishṇu 4.14; Dutt, p. 291.

The sons of [a] Brāhmaṇa father should be entitled to four, three, two and a single share respectively, according to the castes of their respective mothers; or in other words, a son by a Brāhmaṇa mother would take four, a son by a Kshatriya mother would take three, a son by a Vaiśhya mother would take two, while a son by a Shūdra mother would take a single share only. Agni 256.11-12; Dutt, II, 922.

The elder co-wife shall be the companion of her lord, inasmuch as the younger one does not enjoy that privilege. Garuda 95; Dutt, p. 271.

Yayāti had two queens. Matsya 1.24.52; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 78.

King Kaikaya had ten daughters, who all were married to Satrājita. Matsya 1.45.22-24; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 121.

Pushkara said: "A Brahman may take four wives; a Kshatriya, three; a Vaiśhya, two; while a member of the Shūdra caste is not allowed to have more than a single wife." Agni 153.1-4; Dutt, I, 592.

Ajamīḍha had three wives. Matsya 1.49.41-44; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 148.

The King had fifty queens, the best of women, most fortunate and possessing a never-fading youth. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 41.111-25; Sen, II, 285.

Kṛiṣṇa had sixteen thousand queens. Agni 276.3-8; Dutt, II, 1013.

By the pleasure of the Lord Mahādeva all those girls were blessed to have Lord Kṛiṣṇa as their husband. Matsya 2.194.11-20; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 194.

On the other hand, there is evidence that a wife was not always happy to have a co-wife.

It may be he has made some other beautiful woman as my co-wife. . . . She thought that having a co-wife would be more painful than her widowhood. Devī Bhāgavata 1.5.76-82; Vijnanananda, p. 17.

Despite the many verses which sanctioned polygamy, we find that polygamy is reported as a ground for losing caste.

A man loses caste by taking many wives. Agni 168.28–38; Dutt, II, 644.

In the Purāṇas, as also in previous sets of documents, female slaves are mentioned.

By dedicating female slaves, servants, ornaments, cows, land, horses and elephants to an idol, a man acquires wealth and fortune, and goes to heaven after death. Agni 211.63–72; Dutt, II, 758.

A man by forcibly visiting a female slave, should be liable to a fine of ten paṇas. Agni 258.72–73; Dutt, II, 941.

The precise prohibition against women's acquisition of knowledge of the sacred scriptures which was enjoined in Manu (9.18) is reiterated in the Matsya Purāṇa.

Women are by their very nature meek and weak. Women cannot study the Śāstras. Matsya 2.154.156–74; II, 88.

The women are not entitled to utter the Veda Mantras; and hence they are not invested with the holy threads. Agni 152.9–12; Dutt, I, 591.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa speaks of "ignorant women and children" (1.19.29; Rau, I, 100). This Purāṇa states that women "are incapable of weighing evidence" (1.11.41; Chatterjee, p. 364). Yet the Garuda Purāṇa states that a woman baffles the best wisdom of the wise (Garuda 109; Dutt, p. 323).

Warnings against women's managerial ability are found in the Purāṇas.

Dwell not in a country where there is no law, or in which the central government is vested in a more than one responsive head, or which is governed by a woman, or an infant. Garuda 115; Dutt, p. 351.

The strength of a woman lies in her tears. Garuda 115; Dutt, p. 350.

The prohibition against knowledge for women seems to have been overcome in some instances. A very high estimate of a certain queen is recorded.

King Yudhishtira . . . gladly approved of the queen's words, which were sanctioned by righteousness and reason, and characterised by mercifulness, compassion, sincerity, justice and nobleness. Bhāgavata 1.7.49; Rau, I, 37.

We find also the instance of Saunatī, daughter of Devala and wife

of Brahmadata, who succeeded in overcoming the restriction against learning the Brahma lore.

She became learned in the Brahma lore. Matsya 1.20.26; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 65.

For generations India has put handicaps in the way of woman's education; but this restriction has not been totally effective in stifling woman's intellectual training. Throughout the centuries a few women have fought for a chance to secure mental enlightenment. Today Indian women are forging ahead in an inspiring manner.

The actual birth of a child is declared to defile the people in the house.

People of all classes are defiled for a period when there is a childbirth in the house. Matsya 1.18.1-5; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 60.

According to the Purāṇas women accompanied their husbands to the temples.

One who, in company of one's wife and sons, in a temple of Viṣṇu, hears about the sixteen kinds of ordinances, attains the realm of the Lord Viṣṇu, and remains there for one kalpa. Matsya 2.289.17; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 368.

Kukudmin in the company of his wife went to hear the song of the great Brahman. Agni 273.13-16; Dutt, II, 1004.

Even as in the Vedic period, so also in the Puranic there is evidence that women appeared in public assemblages.

. . . in the noble assemblage which will be attended in that sacred city, in company of their beautiful ladies. Matsya 1.69.10-12; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 205.

Women traveled and engaged in trade. However, they were not encouraged to travel abroad.

Freight and tolls should not be collected from women and wandering mendicants. Agni 223.23-29; Dutt, II, 799.

One who takes a girl away to a foreign land after marrying her in his own country is a thief and should be killed. Matsya 2.227.129; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 246.

Miserliness is condemned for both men and women.

The man or woman who exercises miserliness goes to the lower regions. Matsya 1.62.34; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 192.

The Purāṇas urge great care in the construction of a woman's home.

The doorway being blocked by a filthy drain or other impurities causes sterility to women. If there be any obstruction in the shape of pillar, it indicates difficulties to the wife. Matsya 2.225.10-14; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 298.

Fireplaces built for cooking purposes on the east and west cause the death of the owner and widowhood to the womenfolk, and cause also many fears. Matsya 2.254.9-14; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 295.

If Kautaki trees, milky trees, Aśana trees and the straight trees be planted in the house in the above mentioned directions respectively, then it means misery to the lady of the house and her children. Matsya 2.255.20-24; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 298.

The presence of goddesses in the home is besought.

Rest in peace in this house, O thou beautiful goddess who art the daughter of the god Prajāpati. . . . Rest in peace in this quadrangle. . . . O thou goddess of good fortune and gentle demeanours, stay in this house! O thou bedecked with garlands of celestial flowers, and who art worshipped by all and everywhere, increase my offspring and possessions. . . . May I live to witness the realization of my heartfelt desires! May population thrive, and elephants, horses and beasts in general increase in numbers! And may we have more and more wealth every day, by thy gracious blessings. Agni 247.1-23; Dutt, II, 891, 892.

Madhusūdana! as your household is never bereft of the goddess Lakshmi, similarly let not mine be devoid of my wife. Matsya 1.71.8; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 214.

Detailed description of the Tripura fort is given in the Matsya Purāṇa.

The inner compartments for women resounded with the sounds of tinkling bells on their anklets; and these were more beautiful than the Heavens. In these compartments, there were many resting-places . . . tanks, banyan trees, . . . pools, lakes, gardens and forests. Matsya 2.130.21-26; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 4.

On the other hand, reference is made to what appears to have been quite different arrangements for the housing of women.

Women confined in the houses like so many domesticated *Kokilas* [cuckoos] pent up in cages. Matsya 2.188; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 180.

According to the Purāṇas the wife whom a Hindu husband considers ideal to have in his home is pictured in considerable detail.

She who speaks sweetly to her husband and is a clever manager of household affairs, is a true wife. She who is one in spirit with her lord, and devotes her whole self to his happiness, is a true wife.

He whose wife decorates her person with sandal paste, and perfumes her body after her daily ablution, talks little and agreeably, partakes small quantities of food, is ever fond of him, and is constantly engaged in doing acts of piety and virtue with a view to bring happiness and prosperity in the house, and is ever ready to yield to the procreative desires of her lord, is not a man, but the lord of heaven. Garuda 108; Dutt, p. 317.

Noteworthy is the statement of a modern educated Hindu, Narayanaswami Aiyar, concerning a husband's attitude with regard to the conducting of his household. "Each man thinks he is the master of his household. No! He is but the servant of the Lord who has placed him in charge of the household as His proxy. . . . Each one has to keep in mind . . . the lowest dust of the feet of the Lord in reigning over his family."³¹

In the Purāṇas the wives of Brahmans share in the honor and worship which the Brahmans constantly demand for themselves:

The wives of Brāhmaṇas should be worshipped and propitiated . . . whenever there would be anything amiss and regarding the increase of . . . childbirths. Agni 263.17-26; Dutt, II, 975.

Afterwards, the worshipper should bedeck the Brāhmaṇa along with his consort with fine clothes . . . and should look upon him as the moon in the company of Rohiṇī. Matsya 1.57.22,23; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 175.

He [the worshipper] should bathe in the morning, and worship a married Brāhmaṇa couple. Agni 178.13-16; Dutt, II, 682.

³¹ Aiyar, PLMS, p. 240.

Brāhmaṇas, with their wives should be adored by the devotee and by his consort. Matsya 1.62.32; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 192.

The kingdom in which a forlorn Brāhmaṇa's wife weeps and suffers, is destroyed with all its subject people. Agni 222, 15-18; Dutt, II, 795.

There is no preceptor in the three worlds so great as he who gives us knowledge or he who initiates us in the mantras. Either of them is a lac of times greater than the father, and a hundred times greater than the mother. . . . It is mentioned in the Vedas that as the mother is greater than the father, so is the preceptor's wife a hundred times more adorable than the preceptor. The ravishment of the preceptor's wife is a hundred times more scandalous than the violation of one's mother. Brahma-Vaivarta, Brahma Khaṇḍa 10.44-55; Sen, I, 32.

The preceptor, as well as a Brahman husband and a wife, should be propitiated with presents of clothes, etc., whereby the penitent would enjoy all the comforts of this world, and attain salvation in the next. Agni 178.17-20; Dutt, II, 682.

Not only must seven Brahman wives be worshipped along with their husbands, but those Brahman wives are to perform the ceremony for a woman whose children have not survived and to offer prayer.

What should be done at the time of the ablution of a woman whose offspring do not survive?

The Lord said: "Seven Brāhmaṇa ladies, along with their husbands, should be worshipped with garlands, clothes, ornaments, etc., according to the means of the devotee. These women should have no bodily defects. Afterwards, the Brāhmaṇa women should perform the ablution ceremony of the woman whose children do not survive, and recite the following words:

"May this child be long-lived! May this progeny of this woman be long-lived!" Matsya 1.68.1-2, 25-28; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 201, 203.

Since Hindus cherish such reverence for Brahman priests and their wives, what an opportunity these Brahman members of Hindu society could exert if they were able to spread an enlightenment which would make for healthful and happy living!

Rigid caste distinctions forbade intermarriage with women of another caste.

If a low caste man wants to marry a high caste girl and does so, [he] would be punished with death. Similarly a high class woman marrying a low caste man should be punished with death. Matsya, 2.227.131; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 247.

A marriage should take place only between the members of the same class, the union of a person belonging to a higher class with one of the lower being always forbidden. Agni 150.14–18; Dutt, I, 587.

Sacrifices and religious ceremonies should not be performed by a husband in the company of a wife not belonging to the same caste as himself, a privilege which is reserved for his wives of the same caste. Agni 153.1–4; Dutt, I, 592.

The Purāṇas state rules regarding property settlement.

A woman, a servant, and a son—all these three have been said to be poor; for, the wealth acquired by them belongs to their master. Matsya 1.31; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 94.

A woman is protected by her father in infancy, by her husband in youth, and by her son in old age. She has no separate and independent living. Garuda 115; Dutt, p. 351; see also Manu 9.3, SBE, XXV, 328.

A son begotten by a sonless man in another man's wife under a *Niyoga* (authority to beget offspring), should inherit the properties of both his natural father and the husband of his mother, as such a son can offer cakes of obsequies to both of them. A son begotten by a man in his own married and lawful wife, is known as an *Aurasa*, while a *Putrikā Suta* (a daughter's son who by agreement becomes a son of her father) should be deemed as ranking equally with a son of the former class. A son begotten in the wife of a man by one belonging to his own Gotra or by anybody else, is known as a *Kshetraja* son, while a son clandestinely begotten in the paternal house of a woman, is called a *Gūḍha-Utpanna* (born in secret). A son born in the womb of a maiden girl is called a *Kānīna*, and naturally belongs to the father of the girl (maternal grandfather). . . . A son born of a married woman by another, whether she had menstruated or not, is known as a *Paunarbhava*. . . . A child filiated by a person is called a *Kṛitrima* (artificial) son. A child voluntarily offering himself as a son to another, is called a *Dattātman*. . . . A son deserted by one and filiated by another, becomes an *Apavidha* son to the latter. The sons enumerated above are all competent to offer cakes of obsequies and libations of water to their fathers, whether natural or adopted, and to inherit the properties respectively left by them.

The rule, laid down above, shall apply to sons born of mothers, belonging to the same castes as their husbands. A son begotten by a Shūdra out of lust in a female slave, should be entitled to a share in the property left by his deceased father. . . . The wife, daughters, parents, brothers, their sons, persons belonging to the same Gotra, Bandhus, disciples (in the case of a Brahmachārin), should be successively deemed as heirs to such a sonless man; and each of these succeeding relations should inherit his property in the absence of one immediately preceding him in the order of enumeration. This rule shall hold good in the case of the sonless of all castes. Agni 256.13-23; Dutt, II, 922, 923, 924.

A husband is not bound to repay or restore to his wife an estate or a property forming her *Strīdhana*, which he has appropriated in the time of famine, or sold for his medical treatment, or for the purposes of religious acts, or in the event of its being stolen by thieves. A husband marrying a second wife (*Adhivinnā*) in the life-time of the first, and without having assigned any separate property to her as her *Strīdhana*, should settle on her a *Strīdhana* equal in value to what had been settled on his first wife, or a half thereof in the event of the first wife having not been similarly provided for. Agni 256.30-36; Dutt, II, 925.

The six kinds of *Strīdhana* which form the separate property of a married woman, are the *Adhyagni* (gift made to a woman near the nuptial fire or at the time of marriage), the *Adhyāvāhanika* (gift made to a woman at the time of leaving her father's house for her husband's), gifts made by her husband or friends, gifts made by her father, gifts made by her mother and gifts made by her brother. Agni 209.22-27; Dutt, II, 742.

A gift made by a man to his own mother is a hundred times more meritorious than a gift made to an outsider, while the one made to one's father carries a thousand times more merit than the latter. Similarly a gift made by a man to his own daughter, brings him merit which lasts for the eternal time. Agni 209.28-36; Dutt, II, 743.

The king shall manage the properties of a widow who is the mother of a minor child or of those who have no legitimate guardians or relations of their own to protect them in their periods of widowhood. Properties settled on widows who had been faithful wives during the covertures of their marriage, and who are unable, out of ill health or incapacity, to manage their estates to their own benefit, shall also pass under the wardenship of the sovereign. And any attempt on the part of their rela-

tions to rob or to encroach upon a portion thereof, should be meted with the punishment like an act of theft. Agni 223.17-21; Dutt, II, 799.

The mothers (father's wives) not having received anything from their husband or father-in-law by way of their *Strīdhana*, should have a share in the division in the event of equal allotments having been made to each of the sons. Agni 256.1-10; Dutt, II, 921.

The property given to a man by his parents is his own, while his mother should be entitled to an equal share with the sons in the event of the partition having been made by his grandfather. The married brothers are bound to provide for the marriage-expenses of an unmarried daughter of their deceased father, and to give her a fourth part of a share. Agni 256.1-12; Dutt, II, 922.

The estates given a woman by her father, mother, husband or brother, as well as those presented to her near the nuptial fire, or those which fall under the denomination of *Adhibedanikas*, are the four classes of *Strīdhana* recognised by law. The *Badhus* of a woman dying without any issue, should inherit the estate presented to her by her friends and relations, as well as those which are known as the *Anvādheyaka*. The husbands of all castes, should inherit the *Strīdhana* left by their respective wives dying without any issue, while their daughters should be deemed as the legal heirs to such properties in the event of their having any female child; otherwise the property would revert to the father of the deceased. A man by taking back a property, or an estate, formally assigned and made over to his daughter, should be liable to punishment, whereas he is bound to defray the expenses incidental to her marriage and maintenance. Agni 256.30-36; Dutt, II, 925.

The Purāṇas expound upon the dangers of woman's love:

The three kinds of wine are called the *Gauḍī*, the *Paishṭī* and the *Madhvī*, the fourth sort of wine being the woman. It is the wine of woman's love that alone can intoxicate the three worlds. Wine, only when drunk, produces intoxication,—whereas a woman, simply being looked at, may madden the senses of a man, and enshroud his consciousness in the darkness of nescience. Hence a man should refrain from even beholding a woman, as she is wine to his eyes. Agni 353.9-15; Dutt, II, 1301.

There are many verses in the Purāṇas that show high respect for parents. Reciprocally, the love of mothers and fathers for their children is reported.

With their countenance beaming with affection, they brought presents, like children to their parents. Bhāgavata 1.11.4,5; Rau, I, 56.

By devotion to the mother one gets happiness in this world; by devotion to father, in *Madhyaloka* (the mid-region) . . . and by devotion to *Guru*, the preceptor, in *Brahmaloka*. Matsya 2.210.11; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 213.

O father! a mother does never become hostile towards the sons, even when they become so. Mārkaṇḍeya 106.25; Dutt, p. 413.

A father and a mother well-guard their sons. Matsya 2.220.44; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 234.

The mother is the emblem of the earth, and the greatest of all benefactors, male or female. There is no friend or relation greater than the mother. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 72.105-15; Sen, II, 372.

You are kind, as mothers are towards their children. Devī Bhāgavata 7.28.4-45; Vijnanananda, p. 689.

How can a mother curse her sons, when they grow disobedient! Mārkaṇḍeya 106.32; Dutt, p. 414.

The mother is naturally merciful to her child. Devī Bhāgavata 11.18.41-59; Vijnanananda, p. 1112.

Fallen *Gurus* are not to be abandoned. And mother should not be forsaken, even if she does a great vicious crime; for, she is superior to all on account of her bearing the son in her womb and nourishing him. Matsya 2.227.148; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 248.

The worship of female ancestors is to be included in religious ceremonies.

Then the oblations of water should be cast for the propitiation of the souls of one's father, grandfather and the great grandfather, together with those of his mother, grandmother and the great grandmother. Agni 115.10; Dutt, I, 451.

Sixteen kinds of women are to be regarded as mothers.

She who suckles the child, she who yields the child in her womb and gives him food, the wife of the preceptor, the wife of the tutelary deity, the father's wife, the daughter, the brother's daughter, the sister, the daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law, the paternal grandmother, the maternal grandmother, the brother's wife, the mother's sister, the father's sister, the maternal uncle's wife. These . . . are the daughters of

Brahmā, vested with Divine attributes. They are accomplished in every matter and adored in the three worlds. They are not ordinary beings. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 15.34-44; Sen, II, 32-33.

There are many laws in the Purāṇas regarding marriage-regulations:

A man should not marry a woman belonging to his own Gotra, or to a family acknowledging the spiritual leadership of the same *Rishi* as his own. Marriage with a woman is not forbidden where the bridegroom is not related to her within seven degrees in the father's line or five degrees on the side of her mother.

The Brāhma form of marriage is characterised by the giving away of the bride to a man of good and noble parentage and possessed of excellent virtues, and who has been specially invited and requested by her father for that purpose. This sort of marriage should be regarded as the best form of uniting a man and a woman in holy wedlock, as it is supposed to carry the bride's forefathers to heaven. In the *Ārsha* . . . form of marriage, the bride is given away with the presents of a couple of bullocks to the bridegroom; while in the virtue-giving *Prājāpatya* form, the bridegroom, or his relatives on his behalf ask for the hands of the bride. In the *Āsura* form of marriage which is always commendable, the bride is sold for value, while the *Gāndhārva* form is characterised by the union of a man and a woman out of mutual love. Marriage by forcibly carrying away a woman in battle is called the *Rākshasa*, while a marriage by practising fraud on the woman while asleep or otherwise insensible is known as the *Paiśāca*.

On the day of the marriage ceremony an image of Śacī should be made of clay brought from the potter's house, which should be worshipped on the banks of a tank on the same day. A bride should be taken to the house of the bridegroom amidst peals of music and shouts of general joy. A marriage should not be celebrated when the god Keshava would be enjoying his yearly sleep, nor in the months of *Pausha* and *Chaitra*, nor on Tuesdays and lunar days marked by the conditions known as the *Vistis*. Likewise the settings of Venus and the Jupiter and the eclipse of the moon, asterisms in conjunction with the sun, the Saturn, and the Mars, and the astral condition known as the *Vyatipāta* are inauspicious for the celebration of a marriage ceremony. Agni 153.12-16; Dutt, I, 593, 594.

An unmarried girl belongs to the clanship of the same *Rishi* as her fa-

ther, while a married woman goes off by the Gotra of her husband. A woman, if unmarried, should offer libations of water to the souls of her departed forefathers, while a married woman should propitiate the souls of her departed manes, both on her father's and husband's sides, with libations of water. Agni 158.17-26; Dutt, I, 608.

He must marry a maiden who is a third of his age, one who has not too much hair, but is not without any, one who is not very black nor yellow complexioned, and who is not from birth a cripple or deformed. He must not marry a girl who is vicious or unhealthy, born of a low family, or suffering from any disease; one who may have been badly trained, one who talks improperly, . . . one who has a beard and has got a masculine appearance; one who speaks thick or thin, or croaks like a craven, who has got eyes without eye lashes, or [in]sufficiently covered with them; one who has got legs covered with hairs, thick ankles; one who has dimples in her cheeks when laughing. The learned should not marry a girl who has got a tender countenance, who has got white nails, and who has got red eyes. The wise and prudent should not marry one whose hands and legs are heavy, who is a dwarf, or who is very tall, or one whose eyebrows meet, or whose teeth are far apart and resemble tusks. O king, a householder should marry a girl who is at least five degrees distant in descent from his mother and seven degrees from his father. Vishṇu 3.10; Dutt, pp. 197, 198.

Some consideration is given in the Purāṇas to prohibiting a man from marrying under false pretenses.

The man who would negotiate the marriage of a bridegroom, knowingly screening his faults and defects from the guardians of the bride, should be punished with a fine of two hundred paṇas, no matter whether such a marriage has been formally celebrated or not. The man who would give in marriage to a man, a girl who has been previously united with another in lawful wedlock, should be liable to a fine of twelve hundred and fifty paṇas. Agni 227.1-17; Dutt, II, 812.

The man who hiding his faults marries a girl is considered not to have married at all and should pay 200 paṇas to the king. Matsya 2.227. 14-22; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 240.

Marriage difficulties could be discussed at a king's court.

A king's court shall entertain suits in which the legality of a marriage or the fulfilment of any condition appertaining thereto, is contested, or

sought to be enforced either by the husband or the wife; and such a suit shall be denominated as a marriage-suit. Agni 253.13-30; Dutt, II, 905.

Conditions are specified under which a man may remarry.

A man is at liberty to marry a second wife in the event of his first having had no issue after eight years of wedlock; after nine years of that one whose children die in their infancy . . . and instantly when the first is foul-mouthed and tries to give him a bit of her mind. Garuda 115; Dutt, pp. 351, 352.

Despite the provision whereby a husband could remarry under certain circumstances, nevertheless not every husband did remarry after having found that his first wife was childless.

There he married a noble lady, named Chaitrā. He did not marry any other lady, in spite of his not getting any children from his wife Chaitrā. Matsya 1.44.31; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 117.

Conditions were specified under which a wife could and could not be discarded.

A husband is at liberty summarily to discard a wife addicted to the habit of drinking wine, or afflicted with an incurable disease, or found to be inimically disposed towards him. O ye holy sages! a wife blest with the gift of sweetness of speech, tender, and graced with all those peculiar and excellent virtues which are found only in women, should be maintained and provided for at all hazards. The threefold benediction of God reigns in the household where the husband and the wife live in perfect harmony; and paradise is the house which harbours such a true, loving and virtuous pair under its roof. . . . Whoever discards a good and chaste wife, shall give her a third portion of her ornaments before formally effecting a separation. Garuda 95; Dutt, pp. 269, 270.

Conditions or circumstances under which a woman is permitted to marry again are enumerated.

. . . (1) the moral degradation of her husband, (2) his death, (3) renunciation by him of all worldly pursuits, his resorting to a monastery, (4) and his impotency. The widow of a man can marry the brother of her husband if living and willing to take her as his wife, while in the alternative she may marry whomsoever she pleases. The asterisms under whose benign influence a marriage ceremony should be celebrated and gone

through, are the three *Pūrvas*, the asterisms presided over by the gods of fire and wind and the *Rohiṇī*. Agni 153.5-7; Dutt, I, 593.

Men are urged to marry. A mother says to her son:

“O son! Why hast thou foregone the pleasure of blessed matrimony? And why dost thou roam about cheerless and disconsolate without being bound in holy wedlock with an eligible bride?” Garuda 88; Dutt, p. 244.

A man who is not married cannot perform sacrificial duties.

The wifeless man, O King, is not entitled to perform his sacrificial duties, be he a Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, or Vaiśhya. Mārkaṇḍeya 71.11; Dutt, p. 302.

It is equally incumbent upon a husband and upon a wife not to forsake each other.

In forsaking thy wife, thou hast not done a graceful act; for, even as wives cannot desert their husbands, so too men cannot forsake their wives. Mārkaṇḍeya 71.11; Dutt, p. 302.

Very important is it for a man to have a wife.

Without wife a man cannot adore the gods, the ancestral manes, the servant and the guests. In the absence of a wife, or when united with a bad wife, the wealth even when acquired by men and brought to their house, is spent away. It is directly seen that men cannot accomplish their desired objects without wives. The husband and wife, when they jointly carry on pious observances, attain to threefold virtues. As a man satisfies his ancestral manes with offspring, the guests with food, and the immortals with adoration, so with all these should he protect his chaste wife. Mārkaṇḍeya 21. 74-77; Dutt, p. 103.

The wife is the most powerful incentive of men to the observance of the law and the attainment of merit. Especially is the law forsaken on her being forsaken. Mārkaṇḍeya 71.9; Dutt, p. 302.

A lovely wife becomes a cause of happiness. Mārkaṇḍeya 69.33; Dutt, p. 294.

The various advantages for a woman of securing a good husband are enumerated.

The women who get good husbands give peace and comfort to both their paternal and maternal families; and their lives become crowned with success. It is difficult for a woman to get a good husband. Without virtue,

even a tolerable husband is not obtained; because, the natural course of women is to enjoy the company of their husbands for all their lives. The husband of a woman in spite of his being poor, unfortunate, illiterate and void of all fortune, is like a God to her. Without any effort, *dharma*, unlimited pleasures, and wealth to maintain one's life, are all found in husbands. Matsya 1.154.156-74; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 89. The woman who is blessed with her husband, sons and wealth . . . is completely fortunate; and the one bereft of them is extremely unfortunate. Matsya 1.154.156-74; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), I, 89.

A husband helps a woman to attain to "wished-for regions."

A woman has not separate sacrifices, *Śrāddhas* or fasts. By serving their husbands they attain to wished-for regions. Mārkaṇḍeya 16.61; Dutt, p. 82.

A husband is highly desirable for a woman.

O chaste and noble lady! As the husband is the most excellent course for woman, you should always set your heart upon serving your husband. Mārkaṇḍeya 16.62; Dutt, p. 82.

I know full well that there is no better refuge to women than their husbands. Devotion to them leads to benefit both in this world and in the next. Mārkaṇḍeya 16.66; Dutt, p. 82.

The husband being pleased with her, a woman becomes glorious both in this world and in the region of the dead, and attains to felicity. The husband is like a deity to woman. Mārkaṇḍeya 16.67; Dutt, p. 82.

The husband is the wife's friend. Devī Bhāgavata 9.45.1-63; Vijnanananda, p. 980.

The husband . . . supports his wife. He preserves her. He bestows the desired things to her. He increases her happiness. Devī Bhāgavata 9.45.1-63; Vijnanananda, p. 980.

The husband . . . always nourishes his wife, and keeps her in comfort and happiness. Devī Bhāgavata 9.45.1-63; Vijnanananda, p. 668.

The husband is the friend of his wife, her refuge, her god and spiritual guide. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 57.1-14; Sen, II, 329.

Women's safeguards of happiness are their husbands. Therefore women, who are helpless creatures, ought always to serve their husbands. Devī Bhāgavata 9.45.1-63; Vijnanananda, p. 980.

There is no friend in the world so dear to a woman as her husband. The gods or even the religious preceptor are not so dear to her as her husband. Even virtue is not greater, nor is wealth more precious to her, than her husband. In fact, the husband is unsurpassed. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 17.87-96; Sen, II, 169-70.

To a woman, her husband constitutes her god. The husband is as pure as the gods, and represents all virtue. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 57.15-25; Sen, II, 329.

Husband was her God. Bhāgavata 1.7.47; Chatterjee, p. 248.

Sāvitrī said: "To women, husband is their god; husband is their great refuge. Husband is their all in all. Therefore a virtuous woman should follow her lord. Father, brother and sons are the givers of limited things; but the husband is the giver of things unlimited. Who is there who does not adore her lord? It is proper of me to go to the place where my husband is taken, or where he goes himself. I ought to follow him by all my power. Deva! when I shall not be able to follow my lord in your custody, I shall give up my life." Matsya 2.210.17-20; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), p. 214.

A woman has only to honor her husband in act, thought and speech to reach the same region to which he is elevated; and she thus accomplishes her object without any great exertion. Viṣṇu 6.2; Dutt, p. 433.

O Nārada! the woman who is devoted to her husband, God and preceptor, and observes this ordinance, and eats at night only on Sundays, undoubtedly reaches the solar region. Matsya 1.97.19; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), p. 265.

A woman should not be disobedient to her husband. Complete devotion is demanded from her.

The woman who is disobedient to her husband on account of being proud of her brothers, etc., should be driven out of the house by the king. Matsya 2.227.132; A Taluqdar of Oudh (pseud.), II, 247.

A woman who frowns at her husband, or abuses him, goes to the hell of meteors or torches, and dwells there for as many years as the hairs on the body of her husband. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakṛiti-Khaṇḍa, 31.10-21; Sen, I, 173.

A wicked woman who does not know the merits of her husband, adopts the evil path. Ablution in all holy waters, initiation in all ceremonies,

circumambulation round the world, asceticism, vows and gifts of all kinds, fasts, worship of the preceptor or the gods, and other difficult rites are not equal in point of merit to a sixteenth part of the devotion of a woman to her husband. Brahma-Vaivarta, Prakriti-Khaṇḍa 42.18-30; Sen, I, 203.

The sacred and imperative duty of a wife is to carry out the commands of her husband, and to live in perfect obedience to his wishes. Garuda 95; Dutt, p. 270.

By being whole-mindedly intent upon serving her husband, a woman reaps the religious merit earned by a man by worshipping deities, his ancestral manes and guests, and by the performance of pious rites. Mārkaṇḍeya 16.63; Dutt, p. 82.

Whether her husband is (outcaste) or not, wealthy or not, is a matter she entirely ignores. She is constantly engaged in his service. Brahma-Vaivarta, Brahma-Khaṇḍa 6.36-46; Sen, I, 17.

A woman of noble rank, be her husband ugly, fallen, ignorant, poor or diseased, regards him like Viṣṇu. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 44.11-27; Sen, II, 89.

A chaste woman ever ministers to her husband like his mother. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 2.16-31; Sen, II, 4.

The devotion of a woman to her husband was carried to extremes.

The sight and touch of a chaste woman who always eats the refuse of the food of her husband, and drinks water with which his feet are washed, are desired always by the gods. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 57.15-25; Sen, II, 329.

It is stated that mutual love does not always exist between husbands and wives.

Mutual love between the husband and the wife is rare in the three worlds. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 126.48-58; Sen, II, 544.

It is only rarely . . . when a couple is fondly attached to each other that the wife is true at heart. Garuda 114; Dutt, p. 340.

Nevertheless a faithful husband and a faithful wife are unhappy in each other's absence.

A clever woman is consumed by the fire of mental agony caused by the

separation from her husband. . . . Without her husband, a chaste woman is not inclined to eat or drink. Brahma-Vaivarta, Kṛiṣṇa Janma-Khaṇḍa 17.87-96; Sen, II, 169.

The wife of an absentee husband shall renounce all frolics, and forego the pleasures of mixing in society, or of sight-seeing and merry-making. She shall not smile, nor attend to her daily toilette; nor shall she stay in another's house till the return of her lord. Garuda 95; Dutt, p. 270.

As thou never leavest the side of thy goddess Lakshmī, O Lord, may I never feel the pangs of separation from my wife. Agni 177.3-7; Dutt, II, 677.

The characteristics which a woman desires in a husband are enumerated.

A woman wants to secure the society of a youthful, humorous, calm, affectionate, handsome, talented, wealthy and clean person as her lover or husband.

A woman never desires the society of an ill-natured, diseased, ungenerous and indiscreet gallant. Brahma-Vaivarta, Gaṇeśa-Khaṇḍa 20.35-40,41-50; Sen, II, 40.

A man desires the following type of bride:

A woman who loves her husband with her whole soul, and the hue of whose cheeks resembles that of the Madhuka flower, and whose arched eye-brows do not meet each other over the roof of the nose, should be considered as a desirable bride, though possessed of other objectionable features. Agni 244.1-6; Dutt, II, 884.

The death of a wife is among the causes of unhappiness.

The death of one's own dear wife, humiliation at the hands of one's own relations, a debt unpaid and undischarged, a service of the low and the vulgar, and desertion by friends in one's evil days, are the five things which, though not fire in themselves, consume one's vitals. The thoughts of a starving family, a scolding wife . . . are like sword blades to the heart. Garuda 115; Dutt, pp. 347, 348.

The ideal Hindu wife is pictured in glowing terms.

A wife who is not proud of her charms, is a true wife. Garuda 115; Dutt, p. 351.

A loving sweet-speaking wife . . . dispels misery in the world. Garuda 115; Dutt, p. 348.

She was faithful to her husband, kind, sincere, pure and gifted with every female accomplishment, humility and discretion. Vishṇu 3.18; Dutt, p. 232.

The wife whose heart leaps up at sight of her husband, and who casts down her eyes when looked at by him, or casts her coy and timid glances aside at the time of seeing her husband's face, but still cannot take her eyes away from it, and freely gives out all her little stores of secrets,—the wife who is yielding both in body and mind to the wishes of her husband, and nestles herself around her husband's neck on his first return to home, and over-powers him with long and loving kisses, speaks nothing but truth when asked about anything, and feels a happy thrill running through her body at a simple touch of her husband's hand which ultimately resolves itself into little dew-drops of love-perspiration, dresses herself in neat but not costly costumes, shows signs of superb satisfaction on receipts of small presents, deems it a boon for her name to be uttered by her husband, places on her bosom anything sent by him simply for the fact of its having been hallowed with his touch, sleeps after finding him reposing in sweet sleep, and wakes before his waking, and rouses him up in sleep, if necessary, by gently pressing his thighs, should be deemed as a loving wife. Agni 224.3-18; Dutt, II, 801-2.

CHAPTER VI: THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

THE GREAT Epic of the Mahābhārata depicts the social life of India with special emphasis on the Kshatriyas. A. A. Macdonell tells us that

The epic kernel of the Mahābhārata, or the "Great Battle of the descendants of Bharata," consisting of about 20,000 *çlokas*, describes the eighteen days' fight between Duryodhana, leader of the Kurus, and Yudhishtira, chief of the Pāṇḍus, who were cousins, both descended from King Bharata, son of Śakuntalā. Within this narrative-frame has come to be included a vast number of old legends about gods, kings, and sages; accounts of cosmogony and theogony; disquisitions on philosophy, law, religion and the duties of the military caste. These lengthy and heterogeneous interpolations render it very difficult to follow the thread of the narrative. Entire works are sometimes inserted to illustrate a particular statement. Thus, while the two armies are drawn up prepared for battle, a whole philosophical poem, in eighteen cantos, the Bhagavadgītā, is recited to the hero Arjuna, who hesitates to advance and fight against his kin. Hence the Mahābhārata claims to be not only a heroic poem (*kāvya*), but a compendium, teaching in accordance with the Veda the fourfold end of human existence (spiritual merit, wealth, pleasure, and salvation), a *smṛiti* or work of sacred tradition, which expounds the whole duty of man, and is intended for the religious instruction of all Hindus." ¹

In another work, the same eminent professor calls the Mahābhārata "a moral encyclopaedia in Indian literature." ²

The Kshatriyas fought not only the battles against invaders of the land but likewise often the priests for their right to think and to criticize. The Brahmans' attempt to deny the right of thought to Kshatriya women also was not always successful. In this heroic age the poets of the Mahābhārata portray, on the whole, womanhood which was noble, intelligent, and active. In this document we

¹ Macdonell, HSL, pp. 283-84.

² Macdonell, *India's Past*, p. 88.

glimpse women in the home, at court, on the battlefield, and in intellectual and spiritual capacities. Although in some of the earlier Hindu documents women are sometimes pictured as helpless females, in the Mahābhārata we find many accomplished women. Not only are they beautiful in appearance, but they possess real tact and graciousness of character. We find heroines suggested as examples for womanhood. We note that the Brahmans had not stamped out all spontaneous, tender relationship between husbands and wives. There are examples of mutual trust in one another and of sadness resulting from the separation of husband and wife.

High praise for the devoted wife is found in the Mahābhārata, even as in the Laws of Manu and the Purāṇas.

She is the true wife who is a good house-wife. She is a true wife whose heart is devoted to her husband. She is a true wife who is faithful to her husband.

A man's half is his wife. The wife is her husband's best of friends. . . .
The wife is the source of salvation.

Those who have wives can perform religious acts. Those that have wives lead domestic lives. Those that have wives can be happy; and those that have wives can achieve good fortune.

The sweet-speached wives are their husband's friends on the occasion of joy; they are as fathers on occasions of religious acts; they are as mothers in the hours of illness and woe.

Even in the deep forest, the wife is the refreshment and solace of her roaming husband. He who has a wife, is trusted by all. The wife, therefore, is man's great means of salvation. Ādi Parva 1.74.39-43; Dutt, I, 109.

My wife is dearer to me than life itself. Vana Parva 3.52.44; Dutt, III, 79.

To be ever engaged in serving her husband is a higher duty to a woman than sacrifices, asceticism, vows and various charities. Ādi Parva 1.160.24; Dutt, I, 226.

. . . my beloved wife. Vana Parva 3.192.31; Dutt, III, 287.

This is our beloved wife, dearer even than life. Like a mother she is to be cherished; and like an elder sister she is to be respected. Virāṭa Parva 4.3.13; Dutt, IV, 3.

. . . a dear wife. Śalya Parva 9.17.54; Dutt, IX, 33.

No man, even in anger, should ever do anything that is disagreeable to his wife; for, happiness, joy, virtue and everything depend on the wife. Ādi Parva 1.74.50; Dutt, I, 108.

Angirasa's wife possessed good behaviour, beauty and accomplishments. Vana Parva 3.224.1; Dutt, III, 332.

The friend of an exile is his companion; that of a householder, is his wife. Vana Parva 3.312.64; Dutt, III, 447.

In all descriptions of misery there is no medicine similar to a wife; this is the opinion of all the physicians. Vana Parva 3.61.29; Dutt, III, 89.

To a man aggrieved there is no friend equal to a wife that serves as a remedy. Vana Parva 3.61.30; Dutt, III, 89.

You are much respected and beloved by your husband. Udyoga Parva 5.90.92; Dutt, V, 133.

What could be greater evil than (to witness) the death of sons and wives! Vana Parva 3.193.19; Dutt, III, 290.

Causing quarrels between husband and wife ought to be avoided, as well as the sinful ways of life. Udyoga Parva 5.35.43; Dutt, V, 51.

A husband is a woman's refuge. Under smoother circumstances and in a difficult situation a father is the refuge. Udyoga Parva 5.176.8; Dutt, V, 241.

Devoted to her lord, that highly blessed lady always practised high vows. Practising the severest penances, she was always truthful in her speech. . . . She came by spiritual knowledge and power . . . the highly intelligent Kuru dame. Strī Parva 11.16.2-4; Dutt, XI, 16.

Subservience of the wife to the husband is recorded in numerous passages. Her complete devotion is demanded.

Wives are always at the command and disposal of their husbands. Sabhā Parva 2.67.46; Dutt, II, 88.

It behooves the lady, treated fairly or unfairly, not to be angry with her husband. Vana Parva 3.70.12; Dutt, III, 105.

I never bathe or eat or sleep till he, that is my husband, has bathed, or eaten, or slept. Vana Parva 3.232.24; Dutt, III, 345.

Avoiding all excitement and carelessness in the presence of men, conceal your mind by observing silence. You should not stay, or talk, long even with your sons. . . . Therefore worship your husband, adorning yourself with costly garments and ornaments, and besmearing yourself with unguents and perfumes. Vana Parva 3.233.10,12; Dutt, III, 347.

The best ornament of a woman who is without the ornaments, is her husband. Destitute of such an ornament (as the husband), she does not shine, although she is beautiful. Vana Parva 3.68.19; Dutt, III, 102.

Men learned in the Vedas have declared that whether the act be sinful or sinless, it is the duty of the wife to do what her husband commands. Ādi Parva 1.22.27; Dutt, I, 174.

The woman who being commanded by her husband to raise offspring, will refuse to do it, will commit sin. Ādi Parva 1.122.19; Dutt, I, 174.

It is the highest and eternal duty of women,—namely, to sacrifice their lives, and to seek the good of their husbands. Ādi Parva 1.160.4; Dutt, I, 226.

We note that Queen Gāndhārī (Ādi Parva 1.110.13–15; Dutt, I, 160), who shared in the affairs of state, bandaged her eyes that she might not have any joy which was denied her blind husband. Such a denial, to be sure, may seem fanatical and foolish today. The modern woman probably would handle the situation by making her eyes serve for her husband that he might enjoy a richer life. However, the old Indian story shows the wife's rare understanding and deep sympathy for her husband.

In the Mahābhārata, as well as in the Purāṇas, eight types of marriage are described. In the first four the father gives his daughter to a husband. These are called the Brahmanic forms. The fifth kind is purchase, or demon-marriage; the sixth form, *Gāndhārva*, or love-marriage; the seventh, capture-marriage; the eighth, marriage by stealing. Among the savage tribes of the world the carrying-off of a married woman often has been considered heroic; but not so according to the Mahābhārata. Meyer points out that "the Brahmanic form, the warrior form, and the *Gāndhārva* form are lawful: either separately or mingled they are to be followed."³ Meyer also states that "the mutual contract concluded with holy

³ Meyer, SLAI, I, 57.

words by the wife and the husband is declared to be weightier than that concluded by kinsfolk.”⁴

Bhīṣma said: *

“The wise have said that after inviting an accomplished man, a maiden may be bestowed on him decked with ornaments and accompanied with valuable presents as much as lie in the power of the bestower to give.

“Others may bestow their daughters by accepting a couple of kine. Some again may bestow their daughters by taking a fixed sum, and some again take away maidens by force.

“Some marry with the consent of the maidens; some, by dragging them into consent; and some by obtaining their parents’ consent. Some again obtain wives as presents.

“The learned men praise the eighth form of marriage. But the *Svayamvara* is highly spoken of by the kings. But the sages have said that the wife taken by force amidst an assemblage of kings after defeating them is to be highly prized. Therefore, O kings, I carry away these maidens by force.” Ādi Parva 1.102.8–12; Dutt, I, 150.

The Brahmans may choose their wives from the three upper castes, the warriors from two, but the Vaiśya shall choose only from his own caste. If a Brahman begets offspring with a Śūdra wife, he must observe penance. That injunction in the Mahābhārata differs from the Law Book of Manu, for in 3.13 ff. it is held that “for this crime there is no atonement.”⁵ In the Mahābhārata the children of wives from different castes “are on an equality with one another (all take the father’s caste).”⁶ This is not so in the Agni Purāṇa.

A child born of parents belonging to different castes would get the caste of its mother. Agni 150.11; Dutt, I, 587.

The *Gāndhārva*, or marriage by the mutual vows of the betrothed without witnesses, is illustrated in the Mahābhārata by the story of Śakuntalā. After plighting her troth to the King Dushyanta, the latter promises his wife Śakuntalā everything; but leaving her, he forgets his promise to send for her. Years afterward Śakuntalā goes to her husband’s palace and, presenting their son to him, is distracted by misery when the King fails to remember that

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶ *Ibid.*

he has promised that the son of their marriage shall be heir to the throne. His wife finally reminds him that the gods have known what he has done, and will judge him. The poet who gave this story to the Hindus excuses the King's initial failure to recognize Śakuntalā and their son under the pretext that the word of the mother would not have been sufficient to have convinced the people that this was his son. This incident shows how easily such marriages without witnesses could be disavowed.

Along with the explicit injunctions found in the Laws of Manu whereby the selection of a husband was imposed upon the father of the young woman, we find prevalent in Hinduism the question of *Svayaṃvara*, or self-choice. This free choice of a suitor seems to have been practiced chiefly, if not exclusively, among royal maidens of the Kshatriya caste. On this question of *Svayaṃvara*, Hopkins believes that this knightly form in the Epic is not a survival from primitive times, but a later growth. As regards this, Meyer believes Hopkins is right.⁷ The *Svayaṃvara* is pictured in such a story as that of Kuntī (Ādi Parva 1.112.1-13; Dutt, I, 162), who hangs a garland around Pāṇḍu. The story of Draupadī in the Mahābhārata pictures the securing of a husband by means of a contest of skill in weapons (Ādi Parva 1.187-94; Dutt, I, 257-67). We note such passages as the following:

Choose whom you like for your husband. I will (afterward) on (due) deliberation give you away (to him). . . .

That father who does not give away his daughter in marriage, is blamed. Vana Parva 3.292.33,35; Dutt, III, 419.

The *Svayaṃvara* of the daughter of the illustrious Devaka took place. Droṇa Parva 7.144.9; Dutt, VII, 239.

All the Kshatriyas, celebrated in the world, O amiable sister, have come for your hand. O blessed girl, these powerful men will (try to) shoot the mark. Among these (heroes) you shall choose as your husband him who will (be able to) shoot the mark. Ādi Parva 1.188.24; Dutt, I, 258.

She was desirous of choosing her own husband. Udyoga Parva 5.177.15; Dutt, V, 242.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78; see also *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XIII, 168, 169, 357, 360.

A maiden named Keshinī, of peerless beauty, O king, with the desire of a good husband, resolved to choose one in a *Svayamvara*. Udyoga Parva 5.35.6; Dutt, V, 49, 50.

In the account of the maiden Damayantī (Vana Parva 3.57.22–32; Dutt, II, 85) she showed intelligence in recognizing her lover, Nala. Because of her beauty the gods themselves desired Damayantī and disguised themselves as her suitors. When they were lined in a row, however, Damayantī discovered that one lotus in the hand of a suitor was drooped slightly. She knew that this was a human hand, and thus placed her garland on her true lover.

The later devotion of Damayantī to her lover also is recorded in one of the most heroic stories in the Mahābhārata. After several years of happy wedded life Nala became possessed by the demon Kālī (Vana Parva 3.59–76; Dutt, III, 86–115). The fond husband took to gambling and lost all his possessions. He even abandoned Damayantī. There are pathetic accounts of his grief at leaving her asleep in the forest. Damayantī was terror-stricken when she awakened and found herself alone. She roamed the forest in search of her husband and called to him:

Hero, valiant, knowing duty,
 To honour faithful, lord of earth,
 If thou art within this forest,
 Then show thee in thy proper form.
 Shall I hear the voice of Nala,
 Sweet as the draught of *Amṛita*,
 With its deep and gentle accent,
 Like rumble of the thunder-cloud,
 Saying "Daughter of Vidarbha!"
 To me with dear and blessed sound,
 Rich, like Vedas, murmured flowing,
 At once destroying all my grief? ⁸

As time passed on, Nala failed to appear and Damayantī became wasted in form. The princess is described as follows:

Like the young moon's slender crescent,
 Obscured by black clouds in the sky;

⁸ Macdonell, HSL, p. 297.

Like the lotus-flower uprooted,
 All parched and withered by the sun;
 Like the pallid night, when Rāhu
 Has swallowed up the darkened moon.⁹

Having been transformed into a dwarf, Nala finally became the charioteer of the king of Oudh, who was seeking for Damayantī's hand. The princess declared she would accept the king only on condition that he was able to drive five hundred miles in a single day. Nala helped the king to do this and was rewarded with the secret of skill in playing dice. Damayantī recognized Nala. The latter played again at dice, and this time won back his kingdom. Nala was reunited with Damayantī; and years of happiness followed.

In this Hindu epic we also find another noteworthy instance of a maiden's *Svayamvara* in the story of Sāvitrī (Vana Parva 3.292–98; Dutt, III, 418–30). This daughter of Aśvapati, king of Madra, chose Satyavān as her husband. "She too, having got a husband after her own heart, rejoiced exceedingly" (Vana Parva 3.294.17; Dutt, III, 421). He was the son of a blind and exiled king. Sāvitrī made this choice despite the fact that the sage Nārada had warned her that the prince could live only one year. Her husband took her to the forest home of his father. For a year they were happy; but as the fatal day of her husband's death drew near, her anxiety grew great. One day, while going to cut wood, Satyavān became exhausted. His soul was taken by Yama; but Sāvitrī followed the god. Yama at first granted some of her wishes, but not the life of her husband. Sāvitrī, however, was so persistent that at last Yama granted life to Satyavān, and the loving couple lived happily once again.

As in the Laws of Manu, so in the Mahābhārata, elder brothers and sisters must marry before the younger ones. To do otherwise causes loss of caste; and penances for this sin must be performed (12.165.68–69). In Mahābhārata (12.35.27) we find that if the elder brother is killed or has become ascetic, the younger brother may wed.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

Evidence of the happy life of a certain young girl is recorded.

That youth, (Kacha) daily gratified Devayānī who was also in her youth with singing, dancing, and playing on various kinds of instruments.

He gratified . . . Devayānī . . . with the presentation of flowers and fruits, and serving her as an obedient servant. Ādi Parva 1.76.24,25; Dutt, I, 114.

Daughters are praised in the Mahābhārata.

He had three daughters of great religious merit. Vana Parva 3.218.4; Dutt, III, 326.

The daughter of Kuntibhoja, Pṛithā, had large eyes. She was endued with beauty and every accomplishment. She was of rigid vows, devoted to virtue; and she possessed every good quality. Ādi Parva 1.112.1; Dutt, I, 162.

Some men think that father's affection for his son is greater; others (think that father's affection) for his daughter (is greater); but mine is equal. Ādi Parva 1.159.37; Dutt, I, 225.

Man desires son, daughter and wife for himself. Ādi Parva 1.160.3; Dutt, I, 226.

The son is even as one's own self, and the daughter is like unto the son. Anuśāsana Parva 13.45.11; Roy, X, 24.

Not only daughters but also daughters-in-law are equally praised.

There is no difference between a daughter and a daughter-in-law, as that between one's own self and a son. Virāṭa Parva 4.72.6; Dutt, IV, 79.

In the Mahābhārata we have a beautiful picture in which a father allows his little daughter to listen to words of wisdom expounded by a wise Brahman.

My father formerly kept a learned Brāhmaṇa with him. I sat on the lap of my father. That learned Brāhmaṇa used to recite unto me these truths, sweetly consoling me therewith. Vana Parva 3.32.59,61; Roy, II, 73, 74.

However, there is another account in which a daughter is commissioned by her father to wait upon a Brahman.

“O highly wise one, I have a renowned daughter, Pṛithā by name. That damsel is endowed with good manners, is observant of vows, chaste and self-controlled.

“She, without despising you, will wait on you and minister to your comforts. And you also will be pleased with her (graceful) manners.”

Saying this, and duly worshipping that Brāhmaṇa, he (the king) went to his daughter Pṛithā, endued with large eyes, and said to her thus:—

“This highly fortunate Brāhmaṇa, O child, wishes to dwell in my house. . . .

“O child, you will minister to this Brāhmaṇa with great skill. And you will act in such a way as not to belie my words.

“What this highly-energetic, reverend and ascetic twice-born one devoted to the study of the Vedas, asks for, will be given him without any pride.

“A Brāhmaṇa represents the highest energy and the highest devotion; and it is in virtue of the devoutness of the Brāhmaṇas that the sun shines in the heavens. . . .

“O child, now this highly fortunate one is entrusted to your care. You should be particularly careful in ministering to him.” Vana Parva 3.302.10–13, 14–16, 18; Dutt, III, 434.

As regards the inheritance of a deceased father, a daughter shall be treated equally as well as a son.

The son is even as one's own self, and the daughter is like the son. How therefore, can another take the riches when one lives in his own self in the form of his daughter? Anuśāsana Parva 13.45.11; Dutt, XIII, 113.

The similarity of this provision that both son and daughter shall share equally in a father's estate, may be noted in Manu (9.130). The property given by her father to a Brahmanic wife is to be inherited by her daughter if the wife has no son.

Whatever riches the *Brāhmaṇī* wife may acquire by gift from her father, should be taken by her daughter, for the daughter is like the son. Anuśāsana Parva 13.47.25; Dutt, XIII, 116.

Despite these expressions of praise for daughters, we find evidence that a male child was considered more desirable than a female child.

Draupadī gave birth to a daughter also, named Śikhaṇḍinī, and she was transformed into a male child.

She was thus transformed into a male child by a Yaksha, named Sthūṇā, who did it from the desire of doing her good. Ādi Parva 1.63.124–25; Dutt, I, 88.

Let mine be a son, and not a daughter. Udyoga Parva 5.190.4; Dutt, V, 258.

Greater than the desire for a male offspring, however, was the desire of acquiring truth.

Truth is more meritorious than the birth of one hundred sons. Ādi Parva 1.74.101–4; Dutt, I, 110.

On the whole, the predominant view concerning a marriageable maiden in the Epic period probably was that she should be chaste, that she should show implicit obedience toward her parents, and that she should depend upon them for the selection of her husband. However, in India today there is a very noticeable new tendency for the young men and women to exercise their own preferences in selecting their partner for life.

In the Mahābhārata the maiden who “spoils her virginity” is to be punished.

The maiden who spoils her virginity incurs three-fourths of the sin of Brahmanicide, while the man who knows her incurs a sin equal to a fourth part of that of Brahmanicide. Śānti Parva 12.165.43; Dutt, III, 245.

With regard to marriage, there is, on the whole, in the Epic a high sense of morality. The ideal bridegroom shall be chaste and shall be led into wedlock through religious motives, not lust. Great anxiety on the part of the parents is expressed over finding a desirable bridegroom for their daughter. The father must give his daughter in marriage; for the Mahābhārata definitely states (13.24.9) that he who does not give his grown-up daughter to a worthy wooer is guilty of Brahman murder. Meyer reports that “a wife must in no wise be bought or sold”;¹⁰ anyone doing so is greedy and evil-minded. However, history shows that such acts were not uncommon. In *Deutsche Rundschau*,¹¹ Sohm points out that among the Germanic forefathers the free gift of the bride was invalid and

¹⁰ Meyer, SLAI, I, 62.

¹¹ 1878, p. 99.

that only the purchase-marriage was valid according to law.¹² Meyer reminds us that even in the law literature it comes out more or less incidentally in many places that marriage by purchase was general.¹³ However, the upper classes seem to be ashamed of it. The Mahābhārata recommends that continuously from the wedding day the hearts of the bride and bridegroom shall be bound in tender mutual love.

The love life of man and woman is woven intimately with religious edicts into the sacred scriptures. In the Epic, as likewise in other Indian scriptures, there is much description concerning sexual relations of women and men. Meyer writes: "When women become ripe for love—this for the Indian is no romance, but a practical chapter in the physiology of sex."¹⁴ It is praiseworthy that in the Epic there is no child-marriage in the "narrative parts."¹⁵ The heroes and heroines of the Mahābhārata are adults.

In the prophetic parts of the Mahābhārata there are warnings of the dire effects of child-marriages.

O King, no one died in early age, and none took to wife before attaining to age. Ādi Parva 1.64.17; Dutt, I, 88.

The Mahābhārata predicts that in the *Kālī Yuga* there will be fearful deterioration.

Unholy both in thought and deed, men take pleasure in envy and malice. The earth becomes full of sin and immorality.

Girls of seven and eight years of age, give birth to children, and boys of ten or twelve years beget offspring. Vana Parva 3.188.51.60; Dutt, III, 276.

Girls of five and six will give birth to children; and boys of seven or eight years of age will be fathers. Vana Parva 3.190.49; Dutt, III, 283.

The public woman appears in the Mahābhārata. However, the continence of man is praised. India often has been called a land of contrasts. The public woman passes through the pages of Hindu sacred scriptures—praised with song in one breath, but condemned in another. In the Mahābhārata adultery is explicitly condemned.

¹² Meyer, SLAI, I, 101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 215.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

As you have sinfully ravished a girl who has no husband, all the women of your families will become unchaste. Karna Parva 8.45.12; Dutt, VIII, 90.

Yet we find the following words concerning the god Indra:

Ahalyā, the wife of a *Rishi*, herself of good reputation, was ravished by Indra while her husband was alive. Udyoga Parva 5.12.6; Dutt, V, 15.

Even when forsaken by their husbands, chaste women are commanded not to be angry.

Although fallen into great calamity, the chaste women guard themselves by their own efforts, and thus undoubtedly obtain heaven.

Again, chaste women, even if they be forsaken by their husbands, do never become angry; rather they hold their lives shielded by virtuous behaviour.

She should not be angry, forsaken as she was by a person, who himself was foolish, overtaken by distress, and also destitute of all happiness. Vana Parva 3.70.8-10; Dutt, III, 105.

The husband even may kill the adulterer. A part of the fivefold *dharma* (13.141.26) is refraining from adultery. Meyer points out that "naturally in the Epic . . . the ascetic shines in the most glorious of haloes; and great is the worth and the might of his utter renunciation of sex."¹⁶ Meyer, however, shows that the Epic emphasizes that "even the strictest penitents are not proof against woman."¹⁷ The Mahābhārata states:

By forsaking an unchaste wife one does not incur sin. By such treatment the woman herself may be purified while the husband may avoid sin. Śānti Parva 12.35.30; Dutt, XII, 48.

According to the Mahābhārata (12.35.25-26) a wedded wife must not be abducted; penance must be made for such an offense. This, as we know, is contrary to the estimation of such an act in several other cultures. Among the Germanic forefathers, Meyer points out, such an act "was looked on as a glorious deed."¹⁸ Among pre-Islamic Arabs, American Indians, and in the knightly age of Europe it was considered praiseworthy.

The unfortunate status of female servants is reported.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

There is a class of persons called Sairindhri, who enter the service of others. Other females, however, (that are respectable) do not do so. Virāta Parva 4.3.17; Roy, III, 5.

Again and again in the Epic the conquest of the senses is stressed as the highest end. Lustful looking upon women is vigorously condemned, as well as unlawful sexual union.

Those men of foolish understanding who cast wicked eyes upon the married wives of other men, become cursed with congenital blindness on account of that sinfulness of theirs.

Those men who, moved by desire in their hearts, cast their eyes on naked women, those men of wicked acts take birth in this world to pass their whole lives in one continuous disease.

Those men of foolish and wicked acts who indulge in sexual union with women of castes different from their own,—those men of little wisdom,—have to take birth in their next lives as persons shorn of virility. Anuśāsana Parva 13.145.50–52; Dutt, XIII, 300–301.

The Epic warns that a man should not embrace any woman other than his own wife (12.193.11; 13.107.50; 13.144.10–11,13).

Polygamy is a feature of society clearly acceptable in Epic India.

Polygamy is no fault with men. Women only commit sin by taking more than one husband. Ashwamedha Parva 14.80.14; Dutt, XIV, 94.

He had two wives, proud of their beauty and of their youth. Vana Parva 3.106.9; Dutt, III, 163.

To marry more than one wife is not sin among men. It is very sinful for a woman to take a second husband after the first. Ādi Parva 1.160.36; Dutt, I, 227.

It is ordained that a husband can have many wives; but we have never heard that a wife can have many husbands. Ādi Parva 1.197.27; Dutt, I, 268.

He repaired to the forest with his wives, saying, "Whatever of paddy, wheat, gold, animals and women there are on the face of the earth are not sufficient for even one single man.

"Knowing such to be the fact, one should betake to contentment." Thus having renounced all his desires, and cultivating contentment, the Lord Yayāti retired into the woods. Droṇa Parva 7.63.8–10; Dutt, VII, 94.

That one (King Śaśabindu) of illustrious soul has a hundred thousand

wives; and each of these wives was blessed with a thousand sons. Droṇa Parva 7.65.2; Dutt, VII, 95.

With him were four thousand women all wedded to him. Vana Parva 3.122.6; Dutt, III, 183.

He enjoyed for a long time the sweet company of his two wives. Ādi Parva 1.75.47; Dutt, I, 113.

Bharata begot on his three wives nine sons. But none of them was like his father; and Bharata was not satisfied with any of them.

Thereupon their mothers, becoming angry, killed them all. Ādi Parva 1.94.20,21; Dutt, I, 136.

The enmity and sorrow that so often afflict polygamous wives is reported (1.124; 5.35.31,32).

. . . the grief of one who . . . is a co-wife. Sabhā Parva 2.68.81; Dutt, II, 92.

The wife is exhorted to remain faithful to one husband.

Dirghatamas said:

“From this day I make this rule among men, that every woman shall stick to one husband only all through her life.” Ādi Parva 1.104.31; Dutt, I, 154.

All venerable persons are to be respected, as also the women who are devoted to one husband. Vana Parva 3.204.5; Dutt, III, 307.

As all too frequently throughout the world's literature, the view of woman as a chattel appears in the Mahābhārata. Slave girls are mentioned frequently (4.34.5; 8.38.5,7; 5.86.8; 2.51.8,9; 14.85.18; 2.35.53; 12.29.65; 15.14.4; 39.19; 17.1.14; 18.6.12-13; 12.29.133; 3.185.34). A woman slave can be won by a game of dice.

When you have been won (by us) at dice and made our slave, you are to live amongst our serving women as you best can. Sabhā Parva 2.67.33; Dutt, II, 88.

Meyer points out that in the Mahābhārata slave girls “are the natural gift for Brahmans.”¹⁹ Woman is often considered as property.

A wife's duties in the care of the household are described at some

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 509.

length in the Mahābhārata (12.228.60; 13.11.10–13). In the Epic a daughter-in-law must fear the father-in-law and dignity must be observed between them (5.37.5).

O gentle ladies, is your treatment towards your fathers-in-law gentle and considerate? Udyoga Parva 5.30.35; Dutt, V, 38.

The daughter-in-law said:—

“You are the senior of my senior, since you are the deity of my deity. You are, indeed, the god of my god.” Ashwamedha Parva 14.90.76; Dutt, XIV, 109.

The daughter-in-law must not give orders in the presence of her mother-in-law or her father-in-law (12.228.76). Meyer points out that there are some very beautiful relations “between the parents-in-law and the daughter-in-law. Especially with her husband’s mother the younger woman has affectionate, and even intimate, relations. The Epic poetry often touches on this subject; and there is never heard one note of that song of the mother-in-law that we know so well.”²⁰

In certain passages the Mahābhārata indicates that the position of the widow was not a happy one. After the death of her husband, Satyavān, Sāvitrī said:

“I am as good as dead without my husband.” Vana Parva 3.296.52; Dutt, III, 426.

The miserable life of a widow is depicted in the following passage:

Women serve no purpose when their husband is dead. She who lives without her husband, lives a miserable life. . . .

Death is preferable to one who has lost her husband. . . .

She who lives even for a moment after being separated from her husband,—that sinful woman, lives in great misery and in hell. Ādi Parva 1.121.20,21,27; Dutt, I, 172, 173.

Yet there are other verses which indicate that sometimes widows were protected.

He [the King] maintained widows, orphans, the maimed and the poor. Ādi Parva 1.49.11; Dutt, I, 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 404.

That son who does not maintain his mother in her widowhood, meets with disgrace. Vana Parva 3.292.35; Dutt, III, 419.

The custom of widow immolation, which was not present in Vedic times, is noted in the Mahābhārata. There is an instance of four wives all of whom committed *Satī*.

Devakī, Bhadrā, Rohiṇī and Madirā threw themselves on the bodies of their lord.

The four wives of that heroic son of Śūra ascended the funeral pyre and were consumed with the body of their husband. All of them attained to those happy regions which were his.

The son of Pāṇḍu burnt the body of his uncle together with those four wives. Mausala Parva 16.7.18,24-25; Dutt, XVI, 8.

After the death of Pāṇḍu, children having survived, two of his wives, Kuntī and Mādri, debate as to which one should practice *Satī*.

“Therefore, my body shall be burned with that of the king. O revered sister, do not refuse me your permission to what is agreeable to me.” . . .

Having said this, the daughter of the king of Madra, the lawfully wedded wife of that best of men, Pāṇḍu, ascended the funeral pyre of her lord. Ādi Parva 1.125.31,33; Dutt, I, 179.

Edward Thompson is of the opinion that the few instances of *Satī* in the Mahābhārata are “later interpolations.”²¹ Meyer states that

Widow burning is really foreign to the Epic; the cases which do happen to be found are rare exceptions, and undoubtedly belong, at least in far the greatest part, to later revisions. . . . In isolated cases, . . . such a death by self-sacrifice of the woman undoubtedly happened from early times in Aryan India . . . and the Kshatriyas in particular, the forefathers of the Rājputs, who are endowed with the strongest feeling for private property in regard to their wives, may have known it. . . . The widows of Droṇa, Drupada, and the still so young Abhimanyu, go on quietly living, (11.25.19,20,23), to say nothing of others.²²

With regard to inheritance by the widow the Mahābhārata says:

The highest sum that the husband should give the wife is three thousand coins. This wealth that the husband gives to the wife, the latter may spend or dispose of as she likes.

²¹ Thompson, *Suttee*, p. 19.

²² Meyer, *SLAI*, II, 412, 413, 414.

Upon the death of the childless husband, the wife shall enjoy all his riches. Anuśāsana Parva 13.47.23,24; Dutt, XIII, 116.

Meyer states that "the woman is often found inheriting her husband's property in spite of many opposed views."²³

In the Mahābhārata a widow of the upper classes must not make a new marriage. In the higher castes, at least in the noble and the Brahmanic castes, this custom was prescribed by the higher rule of conduct at the time the Epic was built up. Also, it still reflects here and there other and probably older conditions, when in these circles, or at least among the Kshatriyas, another marriage of the widow or of an outcast woman was the custom. Thus it was apparently a matter of course for Damayantī to take another husband when Nala had disappeared (3.70 f.).

Another important and complicated problem of the status of woman at this period in the sacred scriptures of Hinduism is polyandry. Meyer maintains that in the Epic "only one or two cases of it are found; and these are exclusively cases of a community of wives among brothers."²⁴ However, the five famous brothers, heroes of the Mahābhārata, have one wife in common, named Draupadī. Nevertheless, if we trace the origin of these five brothers, we plainly see that they are "unauthorized stranger intruders of a later date."²⁵ Thus Meyer believes that the Pāṇḍavas were of non-Aryan stock; and in an article in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Winternitz also leans toward this view, as he calls the Pāṇḍavas a "non-Aryan mountain tribe."²⁶ As proof of polyandric marriage²⁷ Winternitz points out Mahābhārata (1.191) and Arjuna's speech in which Arjuna holds it quite wrong even to think of making Draupadī the wife of himself alone. Meyer is of the opinion that "polyandry is utterly repugnant to Indian feelings."²⁸ And furthermore, like legendary traditions of polyandric marriages in other countries, there is evidence in the Epic of earlier or still existing conditions of hetaerism; but he believes that "such mythical tales of earlier times often seem . . . to be altogether too bold to be used as wholly credible grounds of proof."²⁹ Meyer

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 108.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

admits that there is "left always a certain doubt" about this question.³⁰ Yet he points out that Draupadī's marriage was reluctantly made. He believes that from the passages brought forward by Winternitz and others, polyandry in India really cannot be deduced.³¹

In the Epics, as well as in the other scriptures of Hinduism, there are many beautiful pictures showing children's tender regard for their parents. The mother becomes the important center of the family life. Indeed in the Mahābhārata the mother is the foremost of all superiors.

O foremost of all men learned in the precepts of virtue, it is said that obedience to superiors is a cardinal virtue. Of all superiors the mother is the foremost. Ādi Parva 1.198.16; Dutt, I, 269.

Many scholars feel that women held a more important position in Epic days than in later times. The Mahābhārata several times exhorts children to be respectful and obedient to mother as well as to father.

The son who obeys the commands of his father and mother, who is humble and a well-wisher of his parents, and who loves them, is the best of sons. Ādi Parva 1.85.25; Dutt, I, 127.

Rāma tried to serve his old parents. Vana Parva 3.213.13; Dutt, III, 322.

Return soon to the side of your parents, and be . . . diligent in honouring your father and mother; for, I do not know, if there is any virtue higher than this. Vana Parva 3.214.13; Dutt, III, 323.

O Karṇa, never do such acts as will lead to the injury of your own self, your friends, your sons, your wives, your mother, and your father. Vana Parva 3.300.1; Dutt, III, 432.

You are worthy of my worship as my mother. Protect me as your son. Vana Parva 3.46.47; Dutt, III, 71.

Listen therefore to the advice of your father and of your mother. Udyoga Parva 5.138.25; Dutt, V, 191.

A mother's affection toward her children is emphasized.

Women give birth to their children with great pain to themselves; and

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

. . . they bring them up with great affection. Vana Parva 3.204.12; Dutt, III, 307.

And furthermore, a woman feels affection not only for her son but also for her son-in-law.

Every woman feels a very great affection for her son-in-law. Ādi Parva 1.116.11; Dutt, I, 166.

The function of the mother in the propagation of the species is recognized.

Some consider the mother to be superior; and some again consider the father as such. The mother, however, performs the most difficult thing; for, she propagates the species. Vana Parva 3.204.17; Dutt, III, 307.

However, it is stated:

The mother is but a sheath of flesh (within which the son dwells). The son, sprung from the father, is the father himself. Ādi Parva 1.74.109; Dutt, I, 110.

Even the wise and holy *ṛishis* admitted that women are necessary. Even *Ṛishis* cannot create men without women. Ādi Parva 1.74.51; Dutt, I, 108.

The Mahābhārata reemphasizes the dependence of women, which is to be found from the Brāhmaṇas onward.

The slave, the son, and the wife,—(these three) are always dependent. They can have no wealth; for, whatever they possess belongs to their master. Sabhā Parva 2.71.2; Dutt, II, 94.

Women are never independent. Ādi Parva 1.174.22; Dutt, I, 242.

Also women are warned not to be curious.

Curiosity is the worst thing in a chaste woman. Udyoga Parva 5.39.80; Dutt, V, 64.

On the other hand woman's intelligence seems to be valued.

O highly-intelligent lady! Vana Parva 3.29.1; Dutt, III, 41.

In this world the nature of women is very subtle. Vana Parva 3.71.6; Dutt, III, 106.

. . . hearing this her speech, pregnant with sense, and consisting of weighty letters and words. Udyoga Parva 5.136.12; Dutt, V, 188.

Great sorrow is expressed by a wife because of separation from her husband:

Thus bewailing, the consort of that high-souled monarch began to search her dear lord in that forest, infested with wild beasts. Vana Parva 3.63.18; Dutt, III, 91.

What is the use of my life, separated as I have been, from that foremost of men? How shall I live today, afflicted with sorrow for my husband. Vana Parva 3.64.90; Dutt, III, 95.

A husband is presented as being a necessity for a woman.

A woman without a husband will always be liable to be sinful. Ādi Parva 1.104.32; Dutt, I, 154.

In the Epic there is an instance of the violent treatment of a woman.

While she was piteously praying . . . he dragged her forcibly by her black hair. Sabhā Parva 2.67.32; Dutt, II, 88.

When the Kshatriya caste was almost exterminated, it was the women who saved that caste from extinction.

When the earth was thus in olden time made Kshatriya-less by that great *Rishi*, the Kshatriya women raised children by the Brāhmaṇas, learned in the Vedas.

They went to the Brāhmaṇas not lustfully, but from virtuous motives. It is said in the Vedas that the son so raised belongs to him that had married the mother.

Thus it was that the Kshatriya race was again brought into existence all over the world. Ādi Parva 1.104.5-7; Dutt, I, 153.

Warning is given against marriage between persons whose ages differ greatly:

A husband of sixty years can never be agreeable to a young wife. Sabhā Parva 2.64.14; Dutt, II, 83.

The Mahābhārata pictures scenes of bloody battle where women come in for a full share in the horrors of war.

. . . that field of battle, terrible to look at . . . and it resounded with the cries of elephants and horses and men and women. Strī Parva 11.16.4,7; Dutt, XI, 16.

The Kuru ladies were plunged into indescribable distress. . . . The cries of those grief-stricken ladies . . . seeing the dead bodies . . . they are running here and there in a body towards their sons and brothers and sires and husbands. *Strī Parva* 11.16.15–19; Dutt, XI, 16,17.

Those Kuru ladies . . . bewildered with sorrow, are running here and there. . . . Some amongst them, heavily sighing and repeatedly bewailing, are stupefied by grief, and are giving up their lives. Many of them, seeing the bodies (of their sons, husbands, or sires) are weeping and lamenting. Others are striking their heads with their own soft hands. *Strī Parva* 11.16.44–48; Dutt, XI, 18.

I heard the piteous cries of my mother and other women of the *Vrigu* race as they were being massacred by the *Kshatriyas*. *Ādi Parva* 1.182.5; Dutt, I, 252.

. . . the ravisher of soldiers' wives. *Virāṭa Parva* 4.25.3; Dutt, IV, 32.

Women are included in the booty of war.

O repressors of foes in battle, upon you I shall confer women adorned with ornaments, plentiful riches and other things that you may like. *Virāṭa Parva* 4.34.5; Dutt, IV, 41.

In the *Mahābhārata* woman is shown as a peacemaker pleading for mercy on enemies.

She forbade her brave son of steady heart from fighting any longer. *Ashwamedha Parva* 14.84.20; Dutt, XIV, 99.

In a story in the *Ashwamedha Parva* we find Queen *Dusshala* urging *Arjuna* to be merciful:

You should show mercy to this child, forgetting the Kuru prince (*Duryodhana*) and the wicked *Jayadratha*. . . .

Taking him [the child] with me, O King, I have come to you desirous of the safety of all the warriors! Do you listen to these words of mine.

This child of that wicked enemy of yours has now come to you, O mighty-armed hero. You should, therefore, show mercy to this infant. . . .

Be pleased with the child whose friends and kinsmen have all been killed and who himself knows nothing of what has taken place. Do not yield to anger.

Forgetting his [the child's] disreputable and cruel grandfather, who offended against you so highly, it is but fit that you should extend your

grace towards this child. Ashwamedha Parva 14.78.35,37-38,40,41; Dutt, XIV, 91.

Meyer maintains that "the woman of the warrior nobility stands proud, strong and honoured wherever Brahman hands and later influences have not smirched her."³² However, it is also stressed again and again in the Mahābhārata that the man's duty is to shelter the woman (4.21.40-43; 14.90.45 ff.; 5.39.83; 5.38.10,11). Not only do we find beautiful, mild, tender, and long-suffering women pictured in the Mahābhārata but there are also women of energy, strong will, and daring pride. The Mahābhārata quite clearly shows that Kshatriya women were not veiled. In the Epic women may have an important share in the events of their time. Queen Gāndhārī appears in the Council Chamber. Sanjaya says to King Dhṛitarāṣṭra:

"I shall not tell you anything in secret, for then, ill feeling against me may enter within you, O king. Have our sire of great vows, and Queen Gāndhārī brought here.

"They will be able to remove any ill-feeling . . . (you may harbour against me), acquainted as they are with virtue and skilled as they are in foresight. In their presence shall I tell you everything. . . ."

Gāndhārī and Vyāsa were brought there by him, who was then spoken to. They quickly entered the Council Chamber. Udyoga Parva 5.67.6,7,8; Dutt, V, 105.

In a passage in the Mahābhārata we note that where there are no male heirs, maidens shall be made rulers.

Install on their thrones the daughters of those that have no sons. Śānti Parva 12.33.45; Dutt, XII, 47.

It is reported that women go hunting and cattle branding with the men (3.239 ff.; 12.126.9; 1.114.9-11). Women take part in picnics and festivals.

In the Mahābhārata it is stated that woman is the light of the house.

Worthy of worship, highly blessed, virtuous, forming the light of their homes—such are the wives, who are the visible embodiments of house-

³² *Ibid.*, II, 439.

hold felicity. It is therefore, that they should be specially protected. Udyoga Parva 5.38.11; Dutt, V, 59.

However, the texts also say that woman is untrue, unreliable, dangerous, of a bad magical nature, weak, and the root of all evil. Let us look at a few samples of such condemning verses:

Women generally speak falsehood. Ādi Parva 1.74.72; Dutt, I, 109.

Where a woman, or where a child, or where a wicked man is the guide, there . . . persons (who make themselves guides) are as helpless as a stone in a river, which sinks. Udyoga Parva 5.38.43; Dutt, V, 60.

Milk is possible in cows, devotion is possible in the Brāhmaṇas; unsteadiness is possible among women. Udyoga Parva 5.36.57; Dutt, V, 55.

Women, kings, serpents, one's own lord, enemies, enjoyments,— . . . for what wise man is it proper to put any reliance on these? Udyoga Parva 5.37.57; Dutt, V, 58.

A woman, a cunning and deceitful person, one that is lazy, one that is fierce, one that is wrathful, one that is vain of his own power, a thief, one that is ungrateful should never be trusted; nor should an atheist. Udyoga Parva 5.39.74,75; Dutt, V, 64.

Men should never trust women, even if they be wedded wives. Ādi Parva 1.235.31; Dutt, I, 315.

All men, attached to children, wives, kinsmen and relatives, sink in the miry sea of sorrow, like wild elephants, when shorn of strength, sinking in a miry slough. Śānti Parva 12.174.27; Dutt, XII, 261.

The permission which was granted to man in Manu (8.112) to speak falsehood to women at the time of marriage and on certain other occasions was carried over into the Mahābhārata.

There is not sin, if falsehood is spoken to women, in marriages, or to save kine, or the Brāhmaṇas. Droṇa Parva 7.191.49; Dutt, VII, 340.

Despite passages condemning women, we find lines showing respect:

Those who are harsh towards the Brāhmaṇas, women, blood relations, and cows fall . . . like ripe fruits from their stalks. Udyoga Parva 5.36.60; Dutt, V, 55.

They who do not . . . cherish their kinsmen, guests, friends, sons, wives, and servants, for such negligence are consumed with sin. Vana Parva 3.2.56,57; Dutt, III, 5.

A woman cannot offend. Virāṭa Parva 4.24.10; Dutt, IV, 31.

O blameless lady. Vana Parva 3.31.25; Dutt, III, 45.

There is a passage which says that woman is unreliable in confidential matters.

In matters of secrecy, a woman, a fool, a boy, a covetous man, a mean-minded person, and he in whom signs of insanity are marked must not be consulted. Vana Parva 3.150.44; Dutt, III, 220.

However, on the whole women in the Mahābhārata are active and influential.

Modesty is one of the virtues appropriate to a Hindu woman (5.90.87). Other desirable traits for the ideal Hindu woman are stated. The goddess of prosperity, Śrī, declares that she is to be found in beautiful and admirable women:

I live in those women who are given to truth and sincerity and who adore the gods. I do not live with those women who do not look after household furniture and provisions . . . and who always utter words against the wishes of their husbands.

I always avoid those women who are fond of the houses of other people and who have no modesty. On the other hand, I live with those women who are devoted to their husbands. . . .

I always live with those women who are truthful . . . who are handsome and lovely in appearance, who are blessed and who are gifted with all accomplishments. I always avoid such women who are sinful and . . . impure . . . who have no patience or fortitude, and who are fond of dispute and quarreling; who are indolent and sleepy and always inclined to lie down. Anuśāsana Parva 13.11.11,12,13,14; Dutt, XIII, 21.

The admirable Sāvitrī is described as follows:

By her ministrations, good qualities, affections, self-control, and good services to all, she pleased everyone.

She delighted her mother-in-law by administering to her physical comforts, and (covering her with) all sorts of robes. And she pleased her father-in-law by worshipping him as a god, and by controlling her words.

Similarly, by agreeable words, by skilfulness, by sweet disposition,

and by ministering to him in private she delighted her husband. Vana Parva 3.294.19–21; Dutt, III, 421.

Proper treatment of women in the home is indispensable to prosperity and happiness. This tendency reaffirms almost verbatim that which is in Manu (3.56–60).

Women should always be adored and treated with love. There where women are treated with honour, the very gods are said to be propitiated.

There where women are not adored, all acts become fruitless. If the women of a family, on account of the treatment they receive, indulge in grief and tears, that family soon becomes extinct.

Women are deities of prosperity. The person that desires affluence and prosperity should honour them. By cherishing women one cherishes the goddess of prosperity herself, and by afflicting her, one is said to pain the goddess of prosperity. Anuśāsana Parva 13.46.5,6,15; Dutt, XIII, 114, 115.

In the Mahābhārata women of the higher castes receive the most privileges. In a polygamous household the wife who is of the Brahman caste is considered the most honorable and head wife. Meyer points out that

The bathing and adorning of the husband, the tooth-cleaning, and the anointing, the sacrifices to gods and forbears, and all else that is done in the house on works of holy law,—all this, no other may ever care for, so long as she is there. . . . Food and drink, wreath, clothing, and ornaments must be handed to the husband by the Brahman woman, for, she is the most important.³³

The Brahman is supposed to wed a woman only of the three higher castes. If he weds a Śūdra woman, he must perform penances. The son of a Brahmanic woman gets a larger inheritance than those of lower-caste wives.

The same self-seeking, dominating character of some Brahmans which is found in other Hindu scriptures continues in the Epics. Priestly pride often asserts itself unrelentlessly; and sometimes this is done at the expense of women. In general the Brahman does not hesitate to set up a superior position for himself. Special privileges are accorded Brahmans. We must remember, however, that the

³³ *Ibid.*, I, 66.

Mahābhārata frequently stresses that there are some things permitted to gods and holy men which are not allowed to ordinary persons. Meyer points out that

The priestly caste in Old India was not so very distinguished for its chaste living. . . . In the Epic, however, what is told of them does not give a particularly unfavorable picture of their sexual morality. That they anyhow preached a loftier sexual ethic is . . . shown by numerous passages in the Epic.³⁴

The Brahman, of course, must not be angered or spoken of scornfully. The humblest services must be rendered him by women as well as by men. Meyer points out that the Brahman dwells upon the word "give."³⁵ Yet the very dwelling upon this word actually may have helped morality. After all, it was the Brahmans who urged the giving away of the bride without a purchase-price. Meyer states that

In Brahmanic literature there often can be found a higher view of woman; and the not seldom lofty moral doctrine which in Brahmanic circles along with all kinds of irritating trash was partly built up in independence, partly, however, taken over from outside, in very many aspects was to woman's advantage also.³⁶

Therefore not all Brahman priests can be condemned. Likewise, we must not be over-critical with regard to the Brahman's life of begging. The Mahābhārata points out that the taking of gifts by Brahmans is good; "the taker wins the same merit as the giver"³⁷ (13.121.14). Thus the Mahābhārata suggests that the giver should consider it an opportunity to win spiritual favor through his act. Meyer declares that "it is the strivings of this very priestly caste that India has to thank, in spite of much that is so unpleasing, for an infinity of good and lovely things in the domain not only of the intellectual but also of the ethical."³⁸

In the Mahābhārata is the highest praise for women and at the same time the bitterest denunciation. Despite prohibitions which the priests attempted to enforce upon the women of the Epic, on the whole these women stand out significantly. They are resolute

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 248.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 440.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 68.

and spiritual. They are not isolated, but are in close contact with the events of their time. They are capable and serviceable members of society. As a matter of fact the Epic seems to have produced far more outstanding portraits of women than of men. Meyer is of the opinion that

The Epic gives us glimpses enough to show us that in those times the woman held in general a more important position than she did later. . . . Or perhaps rather: that in the world of the Mahābhārata, which at least grew up out of an original Kshatriya poetry, the woman was in far higher esteem than she was when controlled by more priestly notions and conditions.³⁹

As in every previous set of the sacred scriptures of Hinduism, so also in the Mahābhārata there is to be found a considerable emphasis on the feminine aspect of divinity.

. . . Aditi, the mother of the gods. Śalya Parva 9.45.17; Dutt, IX, 86.

Those destroyers of foes . . . those illustrious mothers . . . the mobile and immobile universe is permeated by those Auspicious Ones. Śalya Parva 9.46.1,2; Dutt, IX, 89.

The images of gods and goddesses sometimes smile, sometimes tremble. Bhīṣma Parva 6.2.26; Dutt, VI, 3.

O goddess worshipped of all! . . . O giver of victory! O Umā! I bow to you. You are the Vedas . . . You are the highest virtue. Bhīṣma Parva 6.23.6,9,10; Dutt, VI, 29.

O great goddess, with my inner soul purified, I adore you. Through your grace, let victory always attend me in the field of battle. . . .

You are consciousness. You are sleep. You are illusion. You are modesty. You are beauty. You are twilights. You are the day. You are Sāvitrī. You are the mother.

You are contentment. You are growth. You are light. You support the sun and the moon. You make them shine. You are the prosperity of those that are prosperous. Bhīṣma Parva 6.23.13,15,16; Dutt, VI, 29, 30.

He mentally hymned the divine Durgā, the goddess of the three worlds. Virātā Parva 4.6.1; Dutt, IV, 7.

O great goddess! The persons who remember you in the crossing of

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

waters and in the forest and wilderness are never afflicted with calamity.

You are fame and prosperity. You are fortitude and success. You are modesty and knowledge. You are offspring and intellect. You are evening and night. You are light and sleep. You are lunar beam and beauty; and you are forgiveness and mercy.

When worshipped, you remove men's fetters, ignorance, loss of sons, loss of wealth and disease, death and dread. Virāṭa Parva 4.6.22-24; Dutt, IV, 8.

Goddesses were of very great significance to the Hindus of the Mahābhārata. It is interesting to note that after the tragic depression into which some Brahman priests attempted to thrust India's women, the Epic literature again and again considers goddesses and women holy. For generations these very stories of illustrious women and poetic goddesses have helped to stir Hindu women with hope and faith.

CHAPTER VII: THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

AMONG the sacred scriptures of Hinduism the Bhagavad Gītā has probably been most highly esteemed, not only by Hindus but also by people of other faiths. Certainly world literature would be the poorer without it. Also, without it the concept of religion in Hinduism would suffer; for in the Bhagavad Gītā is found a new formulation of religion in terms of devotion. There was reached the revelation of God through human personality. Thus the emphasis on the Hindu religion came to be a personal devotion to a personal deity—in contrast with the Nature-Worship of the four early Vedas, the worship of deities through sacrifice, as in the Brāhmaṇas, and the speculations on an impersonal *Brahma-Ātman*, as in the Upanishads.

Woman receives little attention in this highly revered document; yet perhaps this is quite natural, inasmuch as the setting of the Gītā is a battle scene. However, in the Gītā the deity Kṛishṇa offers an assured salvation to women, as well as to the two lower castes, Vaiśyas and Śūdras.

Even those who are born of the womb of sin—women, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras too—if they resort to me, go on the highest way. Bhagavad Gītā 9.32; Hill, p. 188; ¹ compare Dutt, 6.33.32; VI, 45.

Although in this passage women are classed along with Śūdras, it is very important to note that there is another opinion offered by an intelligent contemporary Hindu that “women are not on a level with the Shūdras, for, from the womb of a Shūdra there cannot be born a Brāhmaṇa or a Kshatriya or a Vaiśhya.” ²

The Bhagavad Gītā preaches against lawlessness—the corruption of women being one of the serious instances and causes of social confusion.

¹ Hill, tr., *The Bhagavadgītā*.

² Sastri, *The Vedic Law of Marriage*, p. 28.

When lawlessness prevails, O Kṛiṣṇa, the women of the family become corrupt^o; when women are corrupted, there appears caste-confusion. 1.41; Hill, p. 108.^o

The following verse suggests a certain depreciatory attitude toward woman and the home:

Unattachment, independence of child, wife, home, and the like . . . these are declared to be knowledge. 13.8-11; Hill, p. 224.

The deity Kṛiṣṇa identifies himself with motherhood and, too, with ethical virtues which are especially exemplified by women, as well as with other aspects of life.

The Blessed Lord said: . . .

“I am the father of this universe, the mother, the creator, the grand-sire.” 9.17; Hill, p. 185.

“All-seizing Death am I, and the Source of things to be; of female powers, Fame, Fortune, and Speech, Memory, Intelligence, Steadfastness, Long Suffering,” 10.34; Hill, p. 199.

CHAPTER VIII: THE RĀMĀYAṆA

INDIA has been called “the natural birthplace of poetry and song.”¹ Just as the Mahābhārata has been termed “the *Odyssey* of the Hindus,” so the other Epic of ancient India, the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, has been characterized as “the *Iliad* of the East.” In comparing it with the Mahābhārata, Monier-Williams points out that the purity of the text of the Rāmāyaṇa “has been exposed to risks, which the longer Epic has escaped. Its story was more popular and attractive. It was shorter, and far less burdened with digressions; it had more unity of plot; its language was simpler and presented fewer difficulties. As a result of these circumstances it was more easily committed to memory. Hence it happened that, even after the final settlement of its text, it became orally current over a great part of India.”² The Rāmāyaṇa is one of the most effective of all Hindu sacred writings. It makes the following claim for itself:

Whoe'er this noble poem reads
That tells the tale of Rāma's deeds,
Good as the Scriptures, he shall be
From every sin and blemish free.
Whoever reads the saving strain,
With all his kin the heavens shall gain.
Brahmans who read shall gather hence
The highest praise for eloquence.
The warrior, o'er the land shall reign.
The merchant, luck in trade obtain;
And Śūdras listening ne'er shall fail
To reap advantage from the tale.

Bāla Kāṇḍa 1.1; Griffith.³

¹ Reed, *Hindu Literature; or, The Ancient Books of India*, p. 153.

² Monier Monier-Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, p. 336.

³ Griffith, tr., *The Rāmāyan of Vālmīki*, p. 6.

The Rāmāyaṇa enjoins the lifelong inseparability of wives and husbands.

According to the Vedas and various other sacred texts, wives are inseparately blended with their husbands. Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa 4.24; Dutt, II, 759.⁴

There is nothing more cruel for women than the forsaking of their husbands. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.24; Dutt, I, 261.

A woman without her husband cannot live. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.29; Dutt, I, 274.

In the Laws of Manu and in the Mahābhārata it is taught that a wife should reverence her husband as if he were a veritable deity. This teaching is reaffirmed in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Verily, unto women cognizant of virtue, a husband, whether he has any merits or not, is a very deity. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.62; Dutt, I, 363.

A husband is a deity unto the wife. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.39; Dutt, I, 303.

They that love their husbands, whether living in the city or the forest, whether well or ill disposed towards them, attain great state. Wicked, or libidinous, or indigent, a husband is a supreme deity unto a wife of noble character. Than the husband a greater friend find I none, O Sītā, who is worthy of being served both in this world and the next, and who is like imperishable asceticism. But bad women, whose hearts hunger after carnality, and who lord over their husbands, do not get acquainted with the virtues and demerits (of their husbands); and range at their will. Surely women of this sort who are given to doing evil acts, reap infamy, and fall off from righteousness. But worthy women like thee, furnished with excellences, see a superior and better world, and range the celestial regions, like pious people. Therefore, following this one, and adopting the course of chaste women, do thou prove the associate in virtue of thy husband. And then shalt thou attain both fame and religious merit. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.117; Dutt, I, 498.

The Rāmāyaṇa teaches that a wife is incomparably the best gift that a man can have.

The wise say that there is no other gift better than that of a wife in this world. Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa 4.24; Dutt, II, 759.

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, the quotations used are from Dutt, *A Prose English Translation of the Rāmāyaṇa*.

The dependence of a woman upon her husband, son, and relatives is continued from the antecedent Laws of Manu.

One of the refuges of a woman is her husband. A second is her son, and a third is her relatives; and a fourth she has none. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.61; Dutt, I, 362.

A wife's service to her husband is enjoined as the best method of attaining unto Heaven.

The woman, who serves not her husband, being engaged in excellent religious rites and fasts, shall fare wretchedly in the life to come. And a woman gets at the excellent abode of the celestials by serving her husband. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.24; Dutt, I, 262.

The social pressure for the urgency of marriage is so great that elder brothers should marry before the younger brothers.

Those . . . who . . . marry before their elder brothers are married, do . . . go to hell. Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa 4.17; Dutt, II, 739.

Adultery is condemned in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Those who kill their friends and elope with their preceptor's wives, do always visit the land of the vicious. Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa 4.17; Dutt, II, 739.

Even that important Vedic deity Indra suffered punishment for the violation of Ahalyā, the wife of the *ṛishi* Gautama.

Brahma then told Indra that his defeat was due to the curse uttered against him by Gautama for his violation of Gautama's wife, Ahalyā. Uttara Kāṇḍa 7.9; Sen, III, 488.

The slaying of a woman is condemned.

The sin . . . reaped by slaying . . . a woman, a boy, or an old man. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.75; Dutt, I, 401.

In 2.67 virgins are mentioned as beautifully attired and enjoying their play in gardens.

Virgins decked in gold . . . repair to gardens for purposes of sport. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.67; Dutt, II, 379.

In the Rāmāyaṇa a mother is to be honored as much as is a father.

A mother should be as much regarded (by a son) as a father is. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.101; Dutt, I, 460.

. . . dear as a father or a mother. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.118; Dutt, I, 498.

Here, as in the Mahābhārata, young women are pictured as waiting-maids:

Mithilā's lord gave many hundred thousands of kine . . . as well as an hundred damsels adorned, endowed with elegance, to form goodly waiting-maids. Bāla Kāṇḍa 1.74; Dutt, I, 168.

Incest is forbidden.

Śāstras sanction the destruction of one who under the influence of passion ravishes his own daughter, sister and younger brother's wife. Kīṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa 4.18; Dutt, II, 742.

In the Rāmāyaṇa (3.13) woman is called unstable and restless.

This hath been the nature of the fair sex from the commencement of creation, that they gladden him that is well off, and forsake a person in adversity.

And women imitate the instability of lightning, the sharpness of weapons, and the celerity of the eagle [*garuda*] and the wind. Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.13; Dutt, II, 535.

The main theme of the Rāmāyaṇa is the story of Sītā, who has come to be the ideal woman for the followers of the Hindu religion. This Epic begins with a description of Ayodhyā, the city ruled by the mighty King Daśaratha. He has three wives, Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī, and Sumitrā. Their respective sons are Rāma, Bharata, and Lakshmaṇa. Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka, ruler of Videha, is the wife of Rāma. We read of their happy marriage in verses such as the following:

The wise Rāma, in the company of Sītā, with his heart dedicated unto her, passed many a season in delight. And Rāma's beloved Sītā, as having been bestowed upon him by his sire, by her loveliness, and her perfections as much as by her loveliness, went on enhancing his joy. And her lord came to exercise a double influence on her heart. And by her own heart, the daughter of Janaka, Mithilā's lord, resembling a goddess in grace, and like unto Śrī (goddess of wealth) herself in loveliness, completely read his inmost sentiment. . . . The excellent princess

looked graceful, even like the lord Viṣṇu, the chief of celestials on being joined with Śrī. Bāla Kāṇḍa 1.77; Dutt, I, 176.

As King Daśaratha feels old age creeping upon him, he decides to make his favorite son, Rāma, the heir apparent.

Born of my eldest wife, worthy of myself, thou crowned with the best qualities, thou art worthy son, O Rāma, dear unto me. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 1.3; Dutt, I, 189.

This decision is received gladly by all the King's subjects with the exception of one of his wives, Kaikeyī, who wishes her son, Bharata, to become the ruler. Kaikeyī is so unhappy that she goes to the "anger-chamber."

What sensible woman can rejoice in the advancement of a co-wife's son! Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.8; Dutt, II, 210.

A wicked adviser, Mantharā, reminds Kaikeyī that she always has been the favorite wife of her husband. Thereupon, Kaikeyī becomes increasingly angry because her son is not to be the King's heir.

Having fully ascertained her course, that weak one, being angry, lay down upon the floor, knitting her eyebrows. The ground was strewn with garlands and excellent ornaments which Kaikeyī had cast away; and they adorned the earth, as the stars adorn the welkin. Clad in a soiled garment, binding fast her braid, she lay down in the anger-chamber. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.10; Dutt, II, 209.

The aged King Daśaratha is unhappy when he learns of Kaikeyī's determination to stay in the anger-chamber. Kaikeyī demands a promise, namely, that her son Bharata shall be the king's successor and that Rāma, the son of the co-wife, shall be banished for fourteen years. Daśaratha begs Kaikeyī not to demand this promise, but Kaikeyī insists. The following day, instead of proceeding to the consecration of Rāma, the king announces Rāma's fate. As a dutiful son, Rāma calmly accepts his enforced exile.

Realizing that because of the banishment of Rāma she will become a sonless wife, Rāma's mother is filled with grief.

A sonless woman has only one cause of mental affliction. Her only sorrow is "I have no child and nothing else, my son. I have not experienced in

my life that blessing and pleasure which women generally feel when their husbands are devoted to them. I have sustained my life so long, O Rāma, only with the hope that I shall have a son. Myself, being the eldest of all the queens, I shall have to hear unpleasant and heart-rending words from the co-wives who are all younger than I. There can be no greater misery for women than this my boundless grief and lamentations. Thou being present, they have reduced me to this miserable plight, I do not know what else they will do, thou being away. There is death certain for me. O my darling! Being disregarded by my husband, I have been greatly insulted. I am equal to the maid-servants of Kaikeyī, or even inferior to them. Those who serve me or are obedient unto me, shall not even speak with me when they will see the son of Kaikeyī (installed). She is always of fretful temper. How shall I, reduced to misery (on account of thy exile) eye the face of Kaikeyī, uttering harsh words?" Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.20; Dutt, II, 247.

There is to be no questioning of the king's orders.

Husband is the deity and master of the wife as long as she lives. So the monarch, being the lord, can deal with thee and me in any way he likes. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.24; Dutt, II, 262.

Kauśalyā must continue to serve her husband.

Even those who do not worship and bow unto the celestials, should serve their husbands, being intent upon their welfare. Such is the virtue that should be always pursued by women according to the Vedas and Smṛitis. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.24; Dutt, II, 262.

Rāma consoles his mother with the following words:

"Engaged in discipline and fasting, and devoted to the services of thy husband, thou shalt attain thy best desire on my return, if this foremost of pious men lives then." Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.24; Dutt, II, 262.

Lakshmaṇa, the king's son by another wife, Sumitrā, decides to accompany his brother Rāma. Sītā likewise is determined to share the exile of her husband.

"O dear husband! Father, mother, son, brother, daughter-in-law,—all of them, abide by the consequences of their own actions. It is the wife alone, that shares the fate of her husband. Neither father, mother, son, friends, nor her own self is the stay of a woman in this or in after life; it is the husband alone that is her only support. If thou dost repair to-

day unto the forest impregnable, I shall go before thee, treading upon the thorns and prickly grass. Confident, do thou take me with thee. There exists no sin in me that could justify forsaking. Under all circumstance unto a woman the shade of her husband's feet is preferable to the tops of a palace. . . . I have been taught by my father and mother to follow my husband in all conditions of life; and I shall carry out now what I have been taught. I shall not abide by any other counsel. I shall wend my way unto the forest impassable, devoid of men, inhabited by tigers and other voracious animals. Happily shall I live there, as if in my paternal house, giving no thought upon the prosperity of the three worlds, thinking only of the services that are to be rendered unto my husband. I shall sport with thee, O great hero, in that forest impregnated with the fragrance of flowers, tending thee constantly, having my senses subdued, and being engaged in austere performances. O great hero! Capable art thou to maintain many thousand others in the forest; what of me? Surely I shall go today to the forest with thee; there is no doubt about it; and thou shalt not be able to dissuade me from so doing. Undoubtedly I shall always live upon roots and fruits. Living with thee always, I shall not bring about thy affliction. Always I shall precede thee when walking, and shall take my repast after thou hast taken it. Willing am I to view mountains, rivulets, lakes and ponds. Being fearless in thy company, O my intelligent husband and great hero, I shall behold on all sides ponds filled with wild geese and ducks, and beautified with a collection of full-blown lotuses, and shall bathe there every day, pursuing the same vow with thee. And greatly gratified, I shall amuse there with thee, in this manner, even for hundred or thousand years. . . . I shall go there in that dense forest, full of deer, monkeys and elephants, and live there as if under my paternal roof, cleaving unto thy feet, and abiding in thy pleasure. Do thou accept my entreaty whose heart is entirely thine, knows none else, and is ever attached unto thee, and who am resolved to die, if forsaken by thee." Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.27; Dutt, II, 270-71.

"The *vinā* [lute] without strings does not sound; and the car without wheels does not move. So, although having an hundred sons, a woman without her husband cannot attain happiness." Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.39; Dutt, II, 303.

"I know that a woman's spiritual guide is her husband. Even if a husband should be poor and of a disreputable character, he should be ungrudgingly obeyed by the like of me." Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.118; Dutt, II, 498.

“The asceticism of a woman is ministering unto her husband. . . . Women of this sort, firm in their husbands, are highly respected in the celestial regions by virtue of their pious acts.” Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.118; Dutt, II, 499.

The narrative points out that Sītā gains her desire not to be separated from her husband.

Sītā, attaining her desire, follows her husband like a shadow. Attached to virtue, she does not forsake him, even as the sun forsakes not Mount Meru. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.40; Dutt, II, 306.

As Rohiṇī, the favorite wife of the moon, followeth the moon, Rāma’s beloved spouse,—like unto an embodiment of Divine power—dear (unto Rāma) as life itself, and engaged in acts of good, . . . and the best of wives, followed Rāma. Bāla Kāṇḍa 1.1; Dutt, I, 3.

The aged King Daśaratha is left distressed, after having complied with the unreasonable wishes of his jealous wife Kaikeyī. He refuses to see her and spends the remainder of his life with his bereaved wife Kauśalyā, mother of Rāma. Another co-wife, Sumitrā, comforts Kauśalyā with the assurance:

“O blameless one! O auspicious lady! You will again see your son, like unto the new risen moon, paying homage unto your feet with his head. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa 2.44; Dutt, II, 315.

Finally, grieving for his son Rāma, King Daśaratha dies.

Meanwhile, Kaikeyī’s son, Bharata, has not lived with his mother, but with his maternal grandparents. When summoned to succeed Daśaratha, he refuses and at once sets out for the forest of Daṇḍaka to search for Rāma, Sītā, and his brother Lakshmaṇa. Upon finding Rāma, Bharata begs him to return to Ayodhyā and become king. Rāma insists upon faithfully fulfilling the term of his exile and refuses to return. He takes off his gold-embroidered shoes and presents them to his brother, Bharata, signifying that he gives his inheritance to him. Bharata is forced to return alone; but he places the golden shoes of his brother Rāma upon the throne and keeps the royal umbrella over them. Only in their presence does he hold conferences and mete out justice.

Sītā is described in the forest of Daṇḍaka.

She is evidently eager (for rest). Of tender years, and unknown to hardship, she hath come to the forest rife with troubles, being urged by the love she bears unto her lord. Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.13; Dutt, III, 535.

Meanwhile Rāma has decided to rid the forest of all the wicked giants who have terrorized the religious hermits living there. He succeeds in slaying thousands of demons. In so doing, however, he enrages their leader, Rāvaṇa. This demon changes one of his subjects into a golden deer. Upon seeing this unusual animal, Sītā asks Rāma and Lakshmaṇa to capture it. While they are in pursuit, Rāvaṇa disguises himself as an ascetic and forcefully carries Sītā away.

“By force I will carry off his wife Sītā, resembling the daughter of a celestial.” Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.36; Dutt, III, 589.

And the wicked (Rāvaṇa) with a shaking frame carried away the daughter of the king extremely distressed, speaking piteously, uttering lamentations, and putting forth endeavours (to free herself). Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.53; Dutt, III, 633.

When Rāma returns and learns of Sītā’s loss, he is grief stricken. He holds his wife dearer than his life, and is ever attached unto her. Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.37; Dutt, III, 592.

“Without Sītā I shall not breathe. . . . Without thee [Sītā] I shall renounce my life.” Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.61; Dutt, III, 651, 652.

“Without her even the heaven itself appears to me as desolate.” Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.62; Dutt, III, 654.

“My heart is sinking, not beholding her fine spotless countenance, having eyes resembling lotuses and smelling sweet. When shall I hear again, O Lakshmaṇa, the sweet, incomparable and auspicious accents of Vaidehī, intervened by smiles, and couched in an elegant and easy style!” Kiṣkindhyā Kāṇḍa 4.1; Dutt, IV, 696.

As time goes on, the sad plight of Sītā is described by Hanumat, the lord of the monkeys. She is forlorn and assailed by the demonic Rākshasa, yet is immovably faithful to her husband Rāma.

Thereupon he beheld there (Sītā) wearing a soiled cloth, poorly, greatly reduced by fast, sighing again and again, and encircled by a band of Rākshasas. She was (however) spotless like unto the rays of the moon

on the first lunar day. And her graceful beauty could with great difficulty be perceived, like unto the flame of fire enveloped with smoke. And wearing a shattered and soiled yellow cloth, and divested of all ornaments, she appeared like a lotus-stalk without lotuses. Oppressed, racked with grief, weakened, and chaste as she was, she appeared like Rohiṇī possessed by Ketu [the dragon]. She was greatly reduced by fast, stricken with grief and anxious thoughts, disturbed with sorrow, and was poorly; and her eyes were always full of tears. Separated from her kith and kin and not beholding Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, but the Rākshasas, she appeared like a hind surrounded by dogs. Her braid of long hair resembling a black serpent falling on her back, it appeared as if the earth was filled with dark-blue forests on the disappearance of the rains. She was worthy of happiness only, and never knew of misery; and therefore she was (now) greatly oppressed with sorrow. Sundara Kāṇḍa 5.15; Dutt, V, 937-38.

Sītā says to Hanumat:

“I hope . . . that my husband shall soon regain me; for, pure is my soul, and he is gifted with many accomplishments.” Sundara Kāṇḍa 5.37; Dutt, V, 997.

Hanumat reports:

“Sītā hath been keeping the life of a highly chaste damsel.” Sundara Kāṇḍa 5.59; Dutt, V, 1075.

“These Rākshasas, and these trees enveloped with fruits and flowers— forsooth she doth not behold, but is engaged with all her heart in meditation, only touching Rāma. Husband enhanceth the beauty of a female more than the dress; (and therefore Sītā), beautiful as she is, doth not appear graceful in her husband’s absence.” Araṇya Kāṇḍa 3.16; Dutt, III, 942.

Sītā says to Rāvaṇa:

Hearing those words of that terrible Rākshasa,—Sītā, stricken with grief and of feeble voice, slowly replied. Racked with grief, engaged in asceticism and weeping, Sītā began to tremble. And that excellent damsel devoted unto her husband began to think of him. . . . That one of beautiful smile, said, “Do thou take back thy mind from me and place it in thy own wives. Like unto a sinner unworthy of praying for final emancipation, it doth not behoove thee to expect to come by me. Devoted unto one husband, I shall never perpetuate such an iniquitous act. I am

born in a high [family], and have been married in a pious family." Having accosted Rāvaṇa thus, the well-known Vaidehī, turning her back, again spake unto him saying,—“I should not live with thee, since I am another's wife and chaste.” Sundara Kāṇḍa 5.21; Dutt, V, 953.

“What shall I do without my lord of comely presence? Debarred from my husband's presence, stricken with grief, and not beholding Rāma, having dark-blue eyes, I shall soon meet with death.” Sundara Kāṇḍa 5.26; Dutt, V, 967.

Many beautiful appellations are given to Sītā. She is called, “O stainless one” (5.56, Dutt, II, 1056); “O gentle damsel” (5.56, Dutt, II, 1057); “O exceedingly fair one” (5.56, Dutt, II, 1057); “O noble lady” (5.56, Dutt, II, 1057); “Exalted lady” (5.58, Dutt, II, 1064); “Worshipful dame” (5.34, Dutt, II, 986); “Illustrious wife of Rāma” (5.58, Dutt, II, 1068).

Hanumat assures Sītā of the unceasing devotion of her husband Rāma.

His heart is so much attached unto thee, that he does not drive away even flies, insects and snakes from his body. Rāma is always engaged in meditations, overwhelmed with grief; and he has no other thought but seeing thee. Rāma hath no sleep; and even when asleep that best of men awakes exclaiming in sweet accents, “O Sītā!” He always welcomes thee, sighing and saying, “O my dear love!”, whenever he beholds any fruit, flower or any object liked by the ladies. O worshipful dame, he is always lamenting, exclaiming, “O Sītā!” And that high-souled son of the king, to regain thee, hath resorted to ascetic observances. Sundara Kāṇḍa 5.36; Dutt, II, 995–96.

While Rāma is burning the body of the vulture, Jaṭāyu, who had tried to save Sītā from Rāvaṇa's attack, he hears a voice from the pyre, which tells him how he may kill his enemies and regain his wife.

The devoted Sītā is described by Hanumat.

She was encircled by Rākshasas, worn out with grief and anxiety, and was like unto the rays of the moon shorn of their brilliance. And Vaidehī, having a beautiful waist, and devoted unto her husband, did not care for Rāvaṇa, proud of his prowess; and she was accordingly confined by him. And that graceful daughter of the king of Videha was, by all means, devoted unto her lord; and had all her thoughts centered in him, like unto

Paulomī [wife of Indra, the lord of the celestials]. . . . And I saw her in that garden, wearing a single piece of cloth, soiled with dirt, surrounded by the Rākshasas, and remonstrated with now and then by those ugly demons. . . . Engaged in thoughts touching her lord, she was lying on the earth, shorn of all grace,—like unto a lotus on the appearance of winter. She had not the least attachment for Rāvaṇa, and was resolved upon putting an end to her existence. *Sundara Kāṇḍa* 5.59; Dutt, II, 1076.

Vaidehī . . . [is] devoted unto her lord. *Sundara Kāṇḍa* 5.59; Dutt, II, 1076.

She (Sītā) is engaged only in thoughts touching thee (Rāma). *Sundara Kāṇḍa* 5.65; Dutt, II, 1090.

Sītā hath been keeping the life of a highly chaste damsel. *Sundara Kāṇḍa* 5.59; Dutt, II, 1075.

Thus I was accosted by Sītā, reduced to a skeleton, observing pious observances. *Sundara Kāṇḍa* 5.65; Dutt, II, 1091.

A group of monkeys then come to the rescue and build a miraculous bridge for Rāma. He leads his army across it to the abode of Rāvaṇa and slays his enemy. Sītā hears of her husband's victory.

The wise monkey Hanumat reports to Rāma.

Sītā, possessed by grief, and having eyes full of tears, expressed her desire to see thee. And I was told by her, confident of her previous trust, with profuse tears in her eyes, "I wish to see my husband." *Yuddha Kāṇḍa* 6.116; Dutt, VI, 1503.

Then to Bībhishaṇa, the messenger of the Rākshasas, Rāma tells of his desire to see his wife, Sītā.

Thereupon, sighing hard, and casting his looks upon the ground, he spoke . . . "Do thou speedily bring Sītā, the daughter of the king of Mithilā, bathed, sprinkled with celestial paste, and adorned with celestial ornaments." *Yuddha Kāṇḍa* 6.116; Dutt, VI, 1503.

Hanumat goes on Rāma's errand, and Sītā expresses a desire to see her husband without delay.

And beholding . . . Sītā . . . Bībhishaṇa . . . said, "O Vaidehī, may good betide thee! Sprinkled with celestial paste, and adorned with celestial ornaments, do thou ascend this car. Thy husband wisheth to see thee." Being thus addressed, Vaidehī replied unto Bībhishaṇa, "Without

bathing even, I wish to see my husband." Hearing those words, Bībhishaṇa replied:—"It behoveth thee to do what thy lord Rāma hath said." Whereto the chaste Maithilī, regarding her husband as God, and filled with devotion unto her husband, replied, "So be it." Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.116; Dutt, VI, 1503-4.

The Rāmāyaṇa then gives us the following picture of the husband and wife.

Rāma addressed the highly intelligent Bībhishaṇa . . . "Therefore, leaving behind the palanquin, let her come here on foot." . . . Being thus addressed by Rāma, Bībhishaṇa, being sorry, humbly brought Sītā near him. . . . As if hiding herself in her own person in shame, Maithilī, following Bībhishaṇa, approached her husband. And she, having a gentle countenance and always regarding her husband as her god, fixed her looks upon her lord's face out of surprise, joy and love. And beholding the gentle countenance of her dearest lord resembling the full moon, she removed her mental distress. Thereupon she appeared (beautiful), having the countenance of the clear moon. Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.116; Dutt, VI, 1505.

At this point Rāma publicly announces his suspicion of Sītā's character.

Beholding Maithilī standing humbly by him, Rāma began to give vent to his pent-up feelings—"O gentle one! Destroying all the enemies in the arena of battle, I have subdued thy enemy—I have done all that can be accomplished by manliness!" . . . Hearing those words of Rāma, Sītā began to look wistfully like a hind, with eyes full of tears. And beholding his beloved spouse near him, and afraid of popular ignominy, his heart was broken into two. Thereupon he spoke unto the exquisitely beautiful Sītā . . . "I (always) anxious to have honour, have removed my insult,—as is the duty of man. May good betide thee!—Do thou know that all my labour in the battle-field, backed by the prowess of my friends, is for thee. To uphold the dignity of my well-known family, to remove the ignominy consequent upon thy being stolen away, as well as to wipe off my own insult, I have encompassed this. I have suspected thy character; thou (therefore) standing before me, art distressing me like unto a lamp before one who is subject to an eye-disease. . . . Do thou therefore proceed, O daughter of King Janaka, wherever thou likest to one of these ten quarters. I permit thee, O gentle one. I have nothing to do with thee. What powerful man, born in a high family, takes back

his wife, considering her as friend out of lust, who hath lived long in another's house? Thou wert taken by Rāvaṇa on his lap, beheld by him with sinful eyes, how can I, taking thee back, bring disgrace upon my great family? The object with which I have gained thee back, hath been accomplished. I have got no attachment for thee—do thou go wherever thou wishest, O gentle one. I speak these [words] unto thee, impelled by my sense of duty. . . ." Thereupon hearing those unpleasant words from her beloved (husband) Sītā, always sensitive and who had never heard such unpleasant words, trembling like a creeper torn by the trunk of an elephant, began to weep, shedding tears profusely. Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.117; Dutt, VI, 1506, 1507.

Being thus addressed by Rāma's harsh words, Sītā was greatly pained. And hearing those words of her lord . . . before the great assembly, Sītā was greatly humiliated with shame. . . . The daughter of King Janaka began to shed tears. Thereupon, wiping the tears off her countenance, she . . . addressed her husband. "Why dost thou, O hero, like a common man addressing an ordinary woman, make me hear these harsh and unbecoming words? O thou of long arms, I am not what thou hast taken me to be. Do thou believe me. I do swear by my own character. Seeing the ordinary women, thou art distrusting the whole sex. Do thou renounce this suspicion, since thou hast tried me. O Lord, though my person was touched by another, it was not in my power; nor was it a wilful act (of mine). Accident is to blame in this. My heart is under my control; and that is in thee. What could I do of my body which was subject to another and of which I was not the mistress! O thou the conferrer of honour! Our affection towards one another was increased by our living continually for a long time. Even then if thou hast not been able to understand me, I am ruined forever. . . . Thou dost not sufficiently honour my character, O thou conversant with characters. Thou art not sufficiently considering all my devotion and good conduct unto thee." Saying thus with accents choked with tears, and weeping, Sītā spoke unto Lakshmaṇa . . . "Make a funeral pyre for me. That is the only remedy for this disaster. Being thus branded with an unfounded stigma, I do not like to keep my life. To adopt the proper course for me who has been renounced before the assembly by my disaffected husband, I shall enter this [pyre]." Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.118; Dutt, VI, 1508, 1509.

Lakshmaṇa, the slayer of enemies, being possessed by anger, looked towards Rāma. And understanding Rāma's intention by gestures and at his command, the powerful Lakshmaṇa prepared a funeral pyre. None

dared there request; speak with, or even look at Rāma. . . . Thereupon circumambulating Rāma, standing with his head down, Sītā approached the burning fire. And bowing unto the celestials and Brāhmaṇas, Sītā, with folded hands, spoke before the fire:—"As my heart hath never gone away from Rāma, may thou protect me, O fire, the witness of the people. As Rāma considereth me vile, who have got a pure character, may fire, the witness of the people, protect me on all sides." Saying this, and going round the fire, Sītā, with undaunted heart, entered the flaming fire. The great assembly there, young and old, overwhelmed with grief, saw Sītā enter the flaming fire. . . . All the females began to weep. Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.118; Dutt, VI, 1509, 1510.

Hearing the lamentations . . . the virtuous-souled Rāma, with a poor heart, and having his eyes full of tears, engaged in meditation for some time. Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.119; Dutt, VI, 1510.

Thereupon the Deity of Fire, the witness of the people, spoke unto Rāma, saying—"O Rāma, here is thy Sītā. No sin hath visited her. Neither by word, mind, understanding, nor eyes . . . hath she deviated from thee. . . . She was in the solitary forest separated from thee, poorly, and having no control over herself; and hence she was carried away by the Rākshasa Rāvaṇa. Although shut up in the inner apartment, well-protected and guarded by the dreadful she-demons, she had always her mind in thee. . . . Although tempted in many a way and remonstrated with, she did not think of that Rākshasa in her inner mind. Her heart is pure; and she is not spoiled with sin. Do thou therefore take back Sītā." . . . Therefore hearing those words, the virtuous-souled Rāma, the foremost of the skilled in speech, with his eyes agitated with delight, meditated for sometime. Being thus addressed, the highly effulgent and intelligent Rāma, of unmitigated prowess—the foremost of the pious, spoke unto that best of celestials, saying—"Beautiful (Sītā) lived in the inner apartment of Rāvaṇa for a long time; so she needs this purification in the presence of all people. If I would take the daughter of Janaka without purifying her, people would say that Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, is lustful and ignorant of the morality of the people. I know it full well that Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka, hath her mind devoted unto me, and hath not given it to anyone (else). As the ocean cannot go beyond its banks, so Rāvaṇa could not approach her, having expansive eyes, protected by virtue of her own chastity. The vicious-souled one could not, even by his mind, get Sītā, who was beyond his reach like unto the burning flame of fire. Her mind could not have been moved,

although she lived in the inner apartment of Rāvaṇa. She belongs to none else. Sītā is mine, as the rays belong to the sun. The daughter of Janaka hath been purified before the three worlds. So I am incapable of renouncing her, as a self-controlled person cannot forsake his (own) reputation. It behoveth me to carry out the well-meaning words of you all, who have spoken out of affection." Saying this . . . the powerful Rāma . . . regaining his spouse, attained to happiness. Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.120; Dutt, VI, 1513, 1514.

Though he was deceased, yet the voice of the aged King Daśaratha is heard.

The king spoke unto his daughter-in-law, who was standing before him with folded hands, saying, "It doth not behoove thee, O Sītā, to be enraged (with Rāma) for renouncing thee and for purifying thee . . . This was done by him ever wishing thy welfare. O daughter, to establish the purity of thy character, what thou hast done, is hard to perform. What thou hast done, shall glorify all other females. Though there is no necessity for giving thee any instruction as regards thy duty towards thy husband, still I should say that he is thy great god." Yuddha Kāṇḍa 6.121; Dutt, VI, 1517.

Thus again is reaffirmed the deep-seated Hindu conception that her husband is a woman's greatest deity.

In estimating the value for womanhood of this Epic poem, there is divergence of opinion. The unsupported suspicions concerning the character of womanhood which were expressed by the revered Rāma have not helped forward the ethical progress of womanhood in India. Let us examine the opinion of a writer on Indian life, Mrs. Sarangadhar Das. She points out that King Daśaratha's polygamous weakness was the original external cause of all the suffering endured in the Rāmāyaṇa. His plurality of wives brought about untold intrigue and jealousy leading to deep unhappiness among the women of the zenana. Whatever may have been the mores of the time, certainly today Rāma can hardly be considered chivalrous in having humiliated Sītā publicly. With regard to this matter Mrs. Das states:

They say that it was his duty, as a just and blameless king, to re-establish before his people beyond cavil or possible breath of slander the purity of their queen. But we may read into the incidents another mean-

ing. This over-emphasis on the physical aspect of womanhood, this lack of confidence which is its natural result, attributed even to the noblest of Hindu kings, explains to some degree why it was possible for laws such as Manu's in time to gain complete ascendancy.⁵

On the other hand, Professor Macdonell has pointed out that "No product of Sanskrit literature has enjoyed a greater popularity in India down to the present day than the Rāmāyaṇa."⁶ Another learned Professor, Moritz Winternitz, has even maintained that "scarcely any other poem in the entire literature of the world has influenced the thought and poetry of the nation for centuries."⁷ Not only occidentals but orientals themselves have given this same high estimate of the powerful influence of the ideals expressed in the Rāmāyaṇa. In the Introduction to his translation of the poem, Manmatha Nath Dutt says:

The influence exercised by the Rāmāyaṇa upon the Hindus, reaching down to the lowest strata of society, is . . . immense. Truly of the Rāmāyaṇa it can be said in Baconian language, that it has come home to the business and bosoms of all men. . . . The Rāmāyaṇa has become a household word in Hindu society; and expressions embodying the memories of incidents celebrated in the epic, pass current amongst all ranks of the people, being mouthed alike by high and low, by prince and peasant, by the aristocracy and the nobility of the land, by merchants and mechanics, by cultivators ploughing the field, and by shepherds keeping the flock, by princesses and high-born dames in towering edifices, and by the women of the peasantry plying their daily tasks, by religionists and politicians, and men of letters,—in short by the community universally [pp. iii-iv].

With regard to the heroine of the Rāmāyaṇa, the same translator says:

Sītā steps forth—a divinity clad in flesh. Sītā would follow the fortunes of her lord. She considers it as the height of undutifulness to remain behind, continuing to enjoy the pleasures of the palace, while her beloved Rāma is leading a life of toil and privations in the remote woods. The daughter as well as the daughter-in-law of kings, brought up in the lap of luxury and amidst the soft ministrations of those pleasures that per-

⁵ Das, PSIW, p. 49.

⁶ Macdonell, HSL, p. 317.

⁷ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I, 476.

tain to a royal household, Sītā, the idol of every man's love and regards, boldly and with alacrity faces all the toils and terrors of a forest-life, in preference to remaining in Daśaratha's residence bereft of the company of her sweet lord [p. ii]. . . . Sītā, the best and fairest of her sex, the embodiment of all loveliness and grace physical and mental, she who rose from the sacrificial fire of inspiration—a goddess in all her manifold perfections and unsurpassed excellences, whose name carries in the very mention a world of pathos [p. iii].

Dutt adds that

Sītā has become the grand exemplar to Hindu women as the embodiment of purity, chastity, and wifely fidelity. She has furnished Hindu ladies with the highest and noblest conception of their duties in their various and manifold relations in life. Her empire is both wide and deep over the hearts of her sex, performing for their eternal behoof spiritual service of incalculable worth [p. iv].

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INDEX

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Variant spellings of certain words are placed in parentheses following the words as spelled by this author.

- Abortion, 85
 Ādi Parva, excerpts, 139 ff.
 Aditi, goddess, 59, 60, 70, 93, 165; attributes, 9; Vedic references to, 9 ff.
 Ādityas, 9, 47
 Adoption of children, 25, 26, 83
 Adultery, 33, 85 f., 102, 149, 171
 Agni, god, 47, 63
Agnihotra, 78
 Agni Purāṇa, excerpts, 95 ff. *passim*, 142
 Ahura Mazda, god, 5
 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 33, 56; excerpt, 54 f., 58, 61; differences in interpretation, 55, 82
 Aitareya Upanishad, excerpt, 70
 Aiyar, K. Narayanaswami, quoted, 94, 123
 All-Indian Women's Conference, 191
 Ambikā, goddess, 92
 Ancestor-worship, 3, 5; female ancestors, 128
 Anthropomorphism, 4, 6
 Anuśāsana Parva, excerpts, 146 ff.
 Aranya Kāṇḍa, excerpts, 177, 178
 Arnold, Edwin, quoted, 193
 Ārya-Dravidian theological systems, 2
 Aryans (Āryans), 1; poets of the Vedas sprung from, 1; compared with the Dasyus, 2; high moral strain in family organization, 48; Brāhmaṇas show conquest of aborigines by, 52
 Ashwamedha Parva, excerpts, 151, 153, 159, 160
 Atharva-Veda (Atharva-veda, Atharvaveda, Atharva Veda), the Veda of Charms, 1; excerpts, 10-44 *passim*, 62
 Ātman, The Supreme Spirit, The World-Soul, 62, 68; *see also* Brahma-Ātman
 Attire, feminine, 40
 Avestan and Vedic religions, connection between, 5
 Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, excerpts, 170, 171, 173-76
 Babies, mortality at birth of, 187, 189, 202; *see also* Children
 Bāla Kāṇḍa, excerpts, 169, 173, 176
 Barrenness, 69, 73
 Bergaigne, A., 7
 Betrothal regulations, 81
 Bhadrakālī, goddess, 96
 Bhagavad Gītā (Bhagavadgīta, Bhagavat Gītā, Bhagawatgīta, Bhagavad-Gītā), 138, 167 f., 192; concept of religion, 167; attitude toward women, 167; Arnold's opinion of, 193
 Bhāgavata Purāṇa, excerpts, 95 ff. *passim*
 Bhīṣma Parva, excerpt, 165
 Bibliography, 205-20
 Black Yajur-Veda, 1; excerpts 10, 20, 40
brahma (meaning "prayer"), 62
 Brahma, The Supreme Reality, 62, 63
 Brahmā, associated with mythological deities in the Purāṇas, 92, 94, 97, 98
 Brahma-Ātman, as interpreted in the Upanishads, 67, 167
 Brāhmaṇas (the "Priestlies"), the, 33, 50-61, 68; code of worship through sacrifice, 50, 167; objectives, influence, 50 ff.; priests (*q.v.*), 50 ff.; transformation of Vedic religion, 51, 52, 54; harmful qualities, 51, 53 f.; elements of religious strength, 52, 53; system of caste in, 52, 198; deities lowered in character, 52 f.; diverse translations

- Brāhmaṇas (*Continued*)
and interpretation, 55; status of women in, 54, 56-61 *passim*, 163; hermits appear as new religious order, 57; preëminence of male among gods and men, 60
- Brahmans (Brahmins, Brāhmins, Brāhmaṇas), the highest caste, ambitions and methods of priests, 50, 51, 52; priests classified with gods, 53; methods of control over the people, 54; subjection of women, 54 ff., 60, 101, 163 f.; growing power and greed, 71, 72; wives of, 123 f., 163; dominating character depicted in the Mahābhārata, 138, 163 f.; marriage forms called Brahmanic, 141; sexual morality of priests, 164
- Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa, excerpts, 95 ff. *passim*
- Brīhad-Āraṇyaka Upanishad, excerpts, 64-69, 70
- Brothers, community of wives among, 155
- Bühler, Georg, translation of Manu, 72*n*; quoted, 82
- Burnell, A. C., and Hopkins, E. W., 82; quoted, 90
- Burning of widow, *see Satī*
- Cāmūṇḍā, goddess, 99
- Caṇḍikā, goddess, 97
- Capture-marriage, 3, 141
- Caste system, origin, 52, 198; retained in Upanishads, 63; Manu's Laws, 74; intermarriage forbidden, 124; choosing of wives from different castes, 142; women turned out of, lose social status, 188
- Caton, A. R., quoted, 88, 89, 188
- Ceremonial, Brahman, 50, 52, 71
- Ceremonies for householder and women, 78
- Chāndogya, Upanishad, excerpts, 69, 70
- Chants, Veda of (Sāma-Veda), 1; excerpt, 13
- Charms, Veda of, 1; *see Atharva-Veda*
- Charms and spells, 35 ff.
- Chattel, women as, 152, 199; slaves, 41, 61, 69, 86, 120, 152
- Childbirth, mortality, 187, 189, 202
- Child-marriage, 34, 47, 54, 82; none in Mahābhārata, 149; desire for sons one cause of, 187; resulting mortality, 187
- Children, female infanticide, 3, 26, 27, 188; adoption of, 25, 26, 83; love for, in Vedas, 27, 31; illegitimate, 33; medical advice on care of, 114; girls offered to temples, 188; *see also* Daughter; Son
- Christianity, spiritual crown of R̥gvedic religion, 47; precepts of Manu compared with, 71; scriptures, 197
- Corporal punishment prescribed by Manu, 83
- Creator, *see* God
- Cures, charms as, 39
- Custom, sacredness of, 195; power to harm, 197
- Damayantī and Nala, story of, 144 f., 155
- Das, Mrs. Sarangadhar, quoted, 71, 184
- Daśaratha, King, in story of Sītā, 172 ff., 184
- Dasyus, compared with Aryans, 2
- Daughter, status of, 3, 20, 25, 26, 32, 103 f., 106, 146; sale of forbidden, 3, 22, 80, 104, 141, 149; described as a misery, 55, 82; given in marriage by father, 59, 80, 81, 104, 105, 141, 148; desired, 68, 107; Manu's Laws, 80; son of, 81, 106; an appointed, 81; liberty to choose suitor, 105, 143 ff.; offered to temples, 188; *see also* Children
- Daughter-in-law, 146, 153, 202
- Dawn, most beautiful odes to, 14
- Dayānand Sarasvatī, 8
- Deities, *see* Goddesses; Gods; Mythology
- Demon-marriage, 141; *see also* Purchase-marriage
- Deutsche Rundschau*, 148
- Devadasis (servants of the gods), a social wrong, 188
- Devas, the, 4, 5; *see also* Mythology
- Devī (Devi), cults, 94
- Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa, excerpts, 95 ff., *passim*
- Disease, *see* Health
- Divorce, 188
- Dowries, 22
- Droṇa Parva, excerpts, 143, 151, 152, 161

- Durgā (Durga), goddess, 93, 94, 165, 196
- Dutt, M. N., 82; translation of the Rāmāyaṇa, 170*n*; quoted, 185
- Dutt, Romesh, quoted, 193
- Dyāus-Prīthivī, deities, 6, 11
- Earth, mythological character, 92; *see* Heaven and Earth
- Education, present-day status, 121, 191, 196, 201; outstanding schools and universities and their locations, 191
- Eggeling, Julius, quoted, 50, 51
- Epics of ancient India, *see* Mahābhārata; Rāmāyaṇa
- Eternal nature, study of, in the Upanishads, 62, 70
- Family life pictured in Vedas, 18 ff., 29 ff.
- Family system, Indo-European, 2 f., 16 ff., 48
- Farquhar, J. N., quoted, 27, 46, 47, 94, 191, 195
- Fleming, D. J., quoted, 199
- Food, could not be eaten with husband, 57, 73, 189
- Forest dwellers, 57, 108
- Frazer, Sir James, quoted, 188
- Frazer, R. W., 43, 48; quoted, 188
- Friess, H. L., and Schneider, H. W., quoted, 94, 95, 192
- Funeral hymns and customs, 41 ff.
- Gāndhārva* (love-marriage), 141, 142; *see also* Marriage
- Ganeśa, god, 94
- Gārgī Vācāknvī, philosophical discussions, 64-66
- Garments, 40
- Garuda Purāṇa, excerpts, 95 ff. *passim*
- Gaurī, goddess, 93
- Gāyatrī, goddess, 92
- Geldner, K., 8
- Gifts, taking of, 53, 164
- Girls, *see* Children; Daughters
- God, Vedic conception of Heavenly Ones, 3, 4, 5 (*see also* Mythology); search for, in the Upanishads, 62; The Ultimate known as a motherly source, 97 f.; revelation of, in Bhagavad Gītā, 167; expression of, in scriptures of Hebrews, in scriptures of Hindus, 201
- Goddesses, Vedic, 5, 9-16; three-group division, 6, 15; parenthood of Heaven and Earth, 6, 12, 16; outstanding divinities, 9-15; the lesser, 15; blessings bestowed by, 15 f.; mother-goddesses, 16, 28, 92, 93, 94; she-fiends, 40, 98 f., 116; Brāhmaṇa laudations, 59; wives associated with, 90; importance of, in the Purāṇas, 92-99, 122; the Śakti (energy) of their husbands, 94 f.; emphasis on, in Mahābhārata, 162, 165; influence potent today, 195; *see also* Mythology; *also names of deities, e.g., Aditi*
- Gods, Vedic, 5; wives of, 6; of the Brāhmaṇas, 52 f., 60; claim of priests to be classified with, 53; goddesses an emanation from, 94; *see also* Mythology; *also names of deities, e.g., Indra*
- Grady, Standish Grove, 82
- Granddaughters, 80, 106
- Grassmann, H., 7
- Gray, Louis H., quoted, 7
- "Great Battle of the descendants of Bharata," 138
- Griffith, R. T. H., translations by, 9*n*; quoted, 10, 13, 16, 19, 23, 25, 30, 32, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42, 43
- Griswold, H. D., quoted, 2 ff., 8, 11, 14, 17, 34, 46, 47, 48, 201
- Hari, god, 8
- Haug, Martin, quoted, 45 f.; interpretation of *kṛpāṇam*, 55
- Haughton, G. C., Jones, William, and, 82
- Health, charms as cures, 39; harmful influence of ancient medical system, 114; of religious superstitions, 200
- Heaven and Earth, parenthood, 6, 12, 16; referred to as sisters, 16
- Heavenly Ones, *see* Mythology
- Hebrews, religion of the, 197, 201
- Hermits (forest dwellers), 57, 108
- Hetaerism, 155
- Hillebrandt, Alfred, 8, 9
- Hinduism, age: earliest scriptures, 1; hardening of religion, 52; reforms being effected within, 192; termed a way of life, 196

- Historical settings of scriptures, deeper realization of, needed, 45, 194, 195, 197
- Home life, Vedic pictures of, 18 ff.; the house, 29 ff., 122 f.
- Hopkins, E. W., quoted, 143
- Hopkins, E. W., Burnell, A. C., and, 82; quoted, 90
- Hume, R. E., 14; quoted, 50, 52, 62 f., 190; translation of Upanishads, 64*n*
- Husband, spiritual preparation for marriage, 77; should be regarded as deity, 113, 170, 184; *see also* Marriage; Wife
- Idā, goddess, 59
- Ideas, 194
- "*Iliad* of the East," Rāmāyaṇa characterized as, 169
- Illegitimate love, 33
- Illness, *see* Health
- Incest, 33, 75, 103, 172
- India, most ancient literature, 1; later systems regarded as Ārya-Dravidian products, 2; crusade against female infanticide, 27; Brāhmaṇas a source of one of most important periods, 50; birthplace of poetry and song, 169; size and other factors bearing upon social condition of women today, 190; statistics re condition of women and children, 201
- Indian National Social Conference, 89, 188
- Indian Social Reformer, The*, 188
- Indian Statutory Committee, 202
- Indo-Europeans, Vedas the oldest literature of, 1; pre-Vedic civilization, 2 ff., 16 ff.; polytheistic basis of their mythologies; later movements toward unity, 47; the Brāhmaṇas earliest-extant prose of, 50
- Indo-Iranians, religion before the dispersion, 5 ff.
- Indra, god, 5, 6, 10, 53, 63, 95, 110, 150, 171
- Infanticide, female, 3, 26, 27, 188
- Inheritance, 147, 154, 163; Manu's Laws, 80 ff. *passim*, 125; property settlement in the Purāṇas, 125-27
- Intellectual training, 121, 191; *see also* Education
- Interpretations, varied, and linguistic difficulties, 7 f., 55, 82
- Jaiminiya, or Talavakāra, Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, excerpt, 60, 61
- Jolly, Julius, 26, 33, 34
- Jones, William, and Haughton, G. C., 82
- Kuvjikā, goddess, 93
- Kālī (Kali), goddess, 94
- Karna Parva, excerpt, 150
- Katha Upanishad, excerpt, 70
- Kātyāyanī, goddess, 92
- Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa, excerpt, 61
- Keith, A. B., 10; interpretation of *kṛiṣaṇam*, 55; *see also* Macdonell, A. A., and Keith
- Kena Upanishad, 63; excerpt, 64
- Kiṣhkindhyā Kāṇḍa, excerpts, 170, 171, 177
- Kṛiṣaṇam*, interpretation of, 55, 82
- Kṛiṣṇa (Kṛiṣṇa), god, 167, 168
- Kshatriya (Ksatriya), caste, 50, 54, 57; emphasis of the Mahābhārata on, 138, 155, 160; free choice of suitor, 143; saved by women from extinction, 158
- Kuvjika, goddess, 93
- Lakshmī (Lakṣmī, Lukhmī), *see* Sri
- Lanman, C. R., Whitney W. D., and, 39
- Law, closely connected with religion, 71; followed in entirety only by higher castes, 89
- Laws of Manu, 71-91; *see entries under* Manu
- Liṅga-worship, 2
- Linguistic difficulties and varied interpretations, 7 f., 55, 82
- Literature, books cited, 205-20; *see also* Scriptures
- Love-marriage (self-choice), 81, 141, 142, 143 ff., 189
- Love poems and charms, Vedic, 35 ff.
- Ludwig, A., 7
- Lukhmī, *see* Lakshmī
- Macdonald, K. S., 16; quoted, 18, 21, 44
- Macdonell, A. A., quoted, 1, 9, 11, 13, 26, 138, 144, 185
- Macdonell, A. A., and Keith, A. B., 8; quoted, 17, 18, 21, 22, 25, 31, 32, 33,

- 34, 41, 43, 44; *Vedic Index* an authoritative thesaurus, 32
- Magic, 115
- Mahābhārata, Epic of the, 138-66, 193; both sacred tradition and social life in legends of, 138; women in, 138 ff.; often noble and influential, 138, 160, 162, 165; marriage, 141 ff.; high sense of morality in regard to marriage, 148; feminine divinities, 162, 165; character of Brahmans in, 163; compared with the Rāmāyana, 169; termed "the *Odyssey* of the Hindus," 169
- Mahālaksmī, goddess, 93
- Maitra, Harendranath, quoted, 98
- Maitreyī, philosophical discussion, 66 f.
- Maitri Upanishad, excerpt, 69
- Mānava-Dherma-Sāstra* (Jones and Haughton), 82
- Maṅgala, goddess, 93
- Manu (Menu), Laws of, 71-91, 189; scholars' appraisals of, 71; women both depreciated and praised, 71; marriage rites and rules, 74 ff.; provisions for inheritance, 80 ff. *passim*, 125; concerning widows, 87 ff.; an injunction not later upheld, 142; laws continued in later scriptures, 143, 145, 147, 163, 170, 171
- Manu Samhitā* (Dutt), 82
- Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, excerpts, 95 ff. *passim*
- Marriage, Indo-European, 3, 17, 21; importance in Hindu life, 3, 21; purchase-marriage, 3, 22, 141, 149; earliest reference to, in scriptures, 21 ff.; the ceremony, 22 f.; child-marriage (*q.v.*), 34, 47, 54, 82, 149, 187; attitude of Brāhmaṇas, 56 ff.; daughter given by father, 59, 80, 81; Manu's Laws, 72 ff.; spiritual preparation of husband for, 77; self-choice, or love-marriage, 81, 141, 142, 143 ff., 189; regulations in the Purāṇas, 101 ff., 129 ff.; high sense of morality with regard to, 138, 148; eight types, 141; in the Mahābhārata, 141 ff.; free gift of Germanic bride invalid, 148; *see also* Widow, Wife
- Matsya Purāṇa, excerpts, 95 ff. *passim*
- Mausala Parva, excerpt, 154
- Māyā, illusion, 63
- Medicine, harmful influence of ancient system, 114; of religious superstitions, 200
- Meyer, J. J., 143, 149, 153; quoted, 17, 34, 57, 141, 148, 149, 150, 154, 155, 160, 163, 164, 165, 187
- Misery, daughter described as a, 55, 82
- Monier-Williams, Sir Monier, quoted, 71, 169
- Monogamy, 3, 16, 17, 189
- Monotheism, movement toward, 47
- Mortality at childbirth, 187, 189, 202
- Mother, importance of, in conception of deity, 16; goddesses worshipped as, 16, 28, 92, 93, 94; The Ultimate known as a motherly source, 97 f.; sixteen kinds of women to be regarded as, 128
- Mothers-in-law, cruelty to son's widow, 202
- Mukerji, Dhan G., quoted, 196, 198, 199
- Müller, Max, 9, 43, 55; quoted, 33, 45, 51, 52
- Mythology, primitive Aryan, 4; the Devas, 5 f.; parenthood of Heaven and Earth, 6, 12, 16; deities worshipped as mother and/or father, 16, 28, 92, 93, 94; polytheism at foundation of Indo-European, 47; worship of deities through sacrifice, in the Brāhmaṇas, 50, 167; *see also* Goddesses; Gods
- Naidu, Sarojini, 196
- Naktā-Uṣasā, deities, 6
- Nala and Damayantī, story of, 144 f., 155
- Names of women, 75
- Nārāyaṇī, goddess, 92
- Nature-Worship, Vedic, 4, 167; changed by Brahmans into a code of ceremonies, 50
- Nirukta* of Yāska, 7
- Niyoga* marriage, 44
- "*Odyssey* of the Hindus," the Mahābhārata characterized as, 169
- Oldenberg, H., 8
- Old people, put out of the way, 3, 27
- Omens, 115
- Oxford History of India*, 43
- Pāṇḍavas, tribe, 155
- Panikkar, K. M., quoted, 191, 196

- Pantheism, in Rig-Veda, 47; in Upanishads, 63
- Pārvatī, *see* Umā
- Patriarchal family, 3, 4
- Philosophic discussions in Upanishads, 62 ff.
- Pischel, R., 7, 9
- Poetry, religious: of the Vedas, 46
- Polyandry, 34, 155
- Polygamy, 17 f., 58, 72, 119, 151, 184; seldom practiced today except to gain son, 188
- Polytheism at foundation of Indo-European mythologies, 47
- Popular Hinduism, Purāṇas belong to, 92
- Prajāpati, god, 53; and daughter, 32, 33
- Prakriti, goddess, 97
- "Priestlies" of Hinduism, *see* Brāhmaṇas
- Priests, pre-Vedic, 4, 5; Brahmins, 50 ff. (*see also* Brahmins); sacerdotalism becomes important part of Hindu religion, 53; control over women, 54, 56; wives, 123 f., 163; sexual morality, 164; intellectual and ethical gifts to India, 164
- Primitive social organization, Indo-European, 2 ff., 16 ff.
- Prithivī, 6; attributes: praises of, 11
- Property settlement, rules in Purāṇas, 125-27; *see also* Inheritance
- Prostitution, 33, 34, 69, 85, 149; life of temple dancers and singers, 188
- Psalms, Veda of, *see* Rig-Veda
- Purāṇas, the, 92-137; importance of goddesses in, 92-99, 122; the three great sects, 94; The Ultimate as a motherly source, 97 f.; she-fiends, 98 f.; women in, 100 ff.; scriptural support of *Satī* found mainly in, 112; medical advice, 114; magic and omens, 115; honor and worship of Brahmins, 123; property-settlement rules, 125; marriage regulations, 129 ff.
- Purchase-marriage, 3, 22, 141; legally valid among Germanic forefathers, 149
- Purdah (Pardah), or seclusion of women, 48
- Puruṣa, deity, 97
- Put-tra*, defined, 83
- Rāma, *see* Sītā and Rāma
- Rāmāyaṇa, the, 169-86, 193; termed "the *Iliad* of the East," 169; attitude toward women, 170 ff.; story of Sītā and Rāma the main theme of, 172-84; modern opinions on value of, 184-86
- Reed, Elizabeth, quoted, 169
- Reforms, social: need of, 88, 89, 195 ff.
- Regnaud, P., 7
- Religion, Hinduism oldest living, 1; pre-Vedic, 3 ff.; ancestor-worship, 3, 5, 128; mythology (*q.v.*), 4, 5 f., 9 ff.; hardening of, after original invasion into India, 52; religious rights of women, 19, 54, 57, 77; law in India closely connected with, 71, 89; need of intelligent examination and evaluation of scriptures, 89, 192 ff.; health and medical care hindered by superstitions, 114, 200; reforms being effected within Hinduism, 192; Hindus inspired by teachings of sacred scriptures, 193; present and future part in development of cultures and freedom, 197
- Religious poetry of the Vedas, 46
- Religious writings, *see* Scriptures
- "Resting-place" of the wife, 56
- Rig-Veda (Rigveda, Ṛigveda, Rig Veda, Ṛgveda, Rik), the Veda of Verses, 1; age, 1; methods of translating, 7 f.; of interpreting, 7 f., 45; excerpts, 9-46 *passim*, 62; odes to the dawn in, 14; dominant polytheism, 47; later philosophies, 47 f.; *see also* Vedas
- Rishis* (Ṛiṣis), poets of the Vedas, 1
- Rohiṇī, goddess, 93
- Roth, R., 7, 9
- Sabhā Parva, excerpts, 140, 152, 157, 158
- Sacerdotalism becomes important part of Hindu religion, 53; *see also* Priests
- Sacred books, *see* Scriptures
- Sacrifice, Brahman ceremonial of, 50, 52 f.
- Sacrificial Formulas, Veda of, 1; *see* Yajur-Veda
- Śāktas, sect, 94
- Śakuntalā, story of, 142
- Śalya Parva, excerpts, 140, 165

- Sāma-Veda (Sāmaveda, Sāma Veda), the Veda of Chants, 1; excerpt, 13
- Sandhyā, goddess, 93
- Śānti Parva, excerpts, 148, 150, 160, 161
- Sarasvatī (Sarasvatī), goddess, 12, 59, 92, 93, 95, 97, 196
- Sarda, H. B., 89
- Sastri, A. M., quoted, 24, 167
- Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, 33, 50, 56, 73; excerpts, 53, 57, 58-61 *passim*
- Satī, goddess, 93
- Satī* (suttee), 3, 42 ff., 47, 154; scriptural support found mainly in the Purāṇas, 112, 113; practice abandoned, 201
- Sāvitrī, story of, 145
- Sāyaṇa, commentary by, 7
- Schneider, H. W., quoted, 194, 195
- Schneider, H. W., Friess, H. L., and, quoted, 94, 95, 192
- Schools and universities and their locations, 191
- Schroeder, L. von, 8
- Scriptures, linguistic difficulties and varied interpretations, 7 f., 55, 82; need of intelligent examination and evaluation, 89, 192 ff.; vast present-day editions being printed, 192; Hindus inspired by their poetry and social and religious teachings, 193
- Séances, Yoga method, 62, 63
- Seclusion of women, 48
- Sects, three during period of the Purāṇas, 94
- Self-choice by maiden, 81, 141, 142, 143 ff., 189
- Sex, overemphasis on, 54; violation upheld in Upanishads, 68 f.; *see also subjects relating to sex, e.g., Adultery; Prostitution*
- She-fiends, 40, 98 f., 116
- Śītā and Rāma, story of, in the Rāmāyaṇa, 172-84; comments on the story, 184-86
- Śiva, god, 8, 63, 94
- Śivaite, sect, 94
- Skanda, god, 94
- Slaves, female, 41, 61, 69, 86, 120, 152
- Smith, V. A., 43
- Social conditions, in India today, 88, 120, 188, 190, 196; depicted in the Mahābhārata, 138
- Social Reform Movement, 192
- Son, desire for, place in family system, 2, 4, 24, 25 f., 69, 83, 107, 147; need for, stressed by Brahmans, 54; of a daughter, 81, 106; adoption, 83; desire for, responsible for child-marriages, 187; for polygamy today, 188; *see also Children*
- Soul, pantheistic: instruction concerning, 66 f.
- Spells and charms, 35 ff.
- Śraddhā, goddess, "Faith," 15
- Śraddha (Shraddha), ceremony for the deceased forefathers, 79, 80, 86, 87
- Śrī (Shrī), goddess Lakshmī, 93, 95; found in admirable women, 162
- Stealing, marriage by, 141
- Strī Parva, excerpts, 140, 158, 159
- Śūdras (Shūdras, Sudras), women classed with, 71, 89, 109, 167, 189
- Sundara Kāṇḍa, excerpts, 178, 179, 180
- Suttee, *see Satī*
- Svayaṃvara* (self-choice), 143 ff.; *see also Marriage*
- Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, excerpt, 70
- Taittirīya Upanishad, excerpt, 69
- Tantras, *Śākta* manuals, 94, 95
- Temple dancers and singers, 188
- Thompson, Edward, 43, 154; quoted, 112
- Tripura fort, description, 122
- Truth, search for, in the Upanishads, 62
- Udyoga Parva, excerpts, 140 ff.
- Ultimate, The, *see God*
- Umā (Pārvatī), goddess, 63, 94, 165
- Universities and schools and their locations, 191
- Upanishads (Upaniṣads), 62-70; religious concepts, 62 ff.; philosophic discussions, excerpts, 63-68; references to women, 63, 68 ff.; speculations on an impersonal Brahma-Ātman, 167
- Uṣas (Ushas), goddess, 5, 6, 14, 33
- Uttara Kāṇḍa, excerpt, 171
- Vāc (Vāk), goddess, 13, 32
- Vajraśiṅkhālā, goddess, 116

- Vālmiki (Valmeeki), Rāmāyaṇa of, 169-86
- Vāmadeva, deity, 10
- Vana Parva, excerpts, 139 ff.
- Varuṇa, god, 5, 47; attributes, 48
- Vāyu, god, 63
- Vedas (Veds), the, 1-49; age: meaning, 1, 45; Nature-Worship, 4, 50, 167 (*see also* Mythology); methods of translating, 7 f.; of interpreting, 7 f., 45; status of women, 7 ff., 16 ff., 48, 189; Griffith's translations, 9*n*; variations in their philosophy, 44 ff.; writings earlier than, 45 f.; should be viewed historically, 45; wholesomeness and high moral strain, 45, 48, 190; religious poetry highly developed, 46; religion of, transformed by Brāhmaṇas, 51, 52, 54; *see also* Atharva-Veda; Rig-Veda; Sāma-Veda; Ya-jur-Veda
- Vedic Index*, excerpts, 17, 18, 22, 26, 31, 32, 33, 44; an authoritative thesaurus, 32
- Verses, Veda of, 1; *see* Rig-Veda
- Virāṭa Parva, excerpts, 139, 146 ff.
- Vishṇu (Viṣṇu), god, 52, 53, 93, 95
- Vishṇuite, sect, 94
- Vishṇu Purāṇa, excerpts, 94, 95 ff. *passim*
- War, women in, 109, 158
- Waters, The, goddesses, 13
- Weber, Albrecht, 33
- Wedding ceremony, 22, 23*n*
- White Yajur-Veda, 1; excerpts, 10, 13, 19, 25, 27, 28, 29, 40
- Whitney, W., and Lanman, C. R., 39
- Widow, 111, 131, 153, 202; *Satī* and other customs, 3, 42 ff., 47, 112, 113, 154, 201; remarriage, 3, 43, 112, 155, 189, 201
- Widows, Manu's Laws, 87 f.; remarriage now legalized, 88; unfortunate conditions growing out of restrictions against remarriage, 88, 201; condition of, today, 201
- Widowers, 89, 131
- Wife, in pre-Vedic civilization, 3, 16 ff.; duties: happiness, 18; status of first, 18; position within joint-family system, 23 f.; interpretation of her "resting-place" in the house, 56; of hermit, 57, 108; Manu's Laws, 72 ff.; Purāṇa record, 101, 108-37 *passim*; husband should be revered as if a deity, 113, 170, 184; Brahman, 123 f., 163; the ideal, 136 f.; high praise for devotion of, 139; choosing of, from different castes, 142; *see also* Marriage; Widow
- Wilson, H. H., 7, 43
- Wilson-Carmichael, Amy, quoted, 188
- Winternitz, Moritz, 155, 156; quoted, 185
- Witnesses, marriage without, 142
- Women, in pre-Vedic civilization, 3, 16 ff.; status of, in earliest Vedas, 7 ff., 16 ff., 48, 189; religious rights, 19, 54, 57, 77; not secluded as inferiors, 31; attire, 40; conditions in India today, 47, 88, 120, 188, 190, 196; seclusion of, 48; subjection by Brahmans, 54 ff., 60, 101, 163 f.; rights allowed by Brahmans, 57; should not eat with husband, 57, 73, 189; treatment of, in Upanishads, 63, 68 ff.; philosophic disquisitions by, 63-68; both depreciated and praised by Manu (*q.v.*), 71 ff.; classed with Śūdras, 71, 89, 109, 167, 189; in the Purāṇas, 100-137; in war, 109, 158; status of present-day education, 121, 191, 196, 202; in Mahābhārata, 138 ff.; often noble and influential, 138, 160, 162, 165; save Kshatriya caste from extinction, 158; given little attention in the Bhagavad Gītā, 167; in the Rāmāyaṇa, 170 ff., 184 ff.; Sītā the ideal for Hindus, 172; influence of Sītā's story upon ethical progress of, 184; conclusions re conflicting ideas about, in Hindu scriptures, 187-203; childbirth mortality, 187, 189, 202; women's movement and its objectives, 191; outstanding organizations, 191; reading and evaluation of scriptures, 198; emancipation of, is of international concern, 200; sometimes refusal to throw off shackles, 202; *see also* Daughter; Mother; Wife; Widow
- Yājñavalkya, philosophical discussions, 64

- Yajur-Veda (Yajurveda, Black Yajus School), the Veda of Sacrificial Formulas, 1; *see also* Black Yajur-Veda; White Yajur-Veda
- Yama and Yamī, deities, 33
- Yāska, *Nirukta* of, 7
- Yoga system, 63
- Yuddha Kāṇḍa, excerpts, 180-84
- Zimmer, Heinrich, 26, 33, 44

VITA

Mildreth Worth Pinkham was born in Flushing, New York, June 20, 1897. Her elementary and academic education was received at the Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn, New York. She was graduated from the Junior College of this same institution in 1917. She received the degree of Bachelor of Science from Columbia University in 1933. In 1935 she received the degree of Master of Arts in Theology from Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary.