



Women and Spirituality

Just because women are physically weaker than men, man has done everything to make them psychologically weaker than himself, spiritually lost and financially nowhere. This has continued for thousands of years. It is time people stood up and did something about it. Until every man learns to respect a woman, he will never know *himself*; there is no way, because half of him is just that.

Indian spirituality has always been a rich mixture of men and women reaching the heights of their consciousness. It is proved beyond doubt that a woman is as much capable as a man when it comes to the inner nature. It is only the peel that you can call a man or a woman. The Self is the same. Either you wear a masculine peel or a feminine peel. That is all it is. The peel does not decide what your spiritual capabilities are.

Maybe there are certain biological disadvantages, but as we see now, psychologically, women are better equipped. Right from the Vedic times there have been many women who have been great saints, who reached the very heights of consciousness. The earliest form of worship always started as worshipping the Divine as a mother, holding the Ultimate Divinity as the mother.

During the Vedic times, a woman also wore the sacred thread as a Brahmin wears today. She was also eligible to wear the thread, because without the thread you are not supposed to read the Vedas and the Upanishads. During those times, a woman was on par with a man in every way as far as spirituality

was concerned. These were well-settled societies. Right from the year 3000 B.C.E. that we know of history, a woman was on par with a man in India.

Then, barbarian hordes invaded the country from parts of Asia like Mongolia, Central China and Indo-China. They were outsiders who were totally gross, whose ways were to grab things and leave. So, men started becoming protective. Then somewhere

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along the way, in this atmosphere, women slowly lost their freedom. Slowly, the process became so biased that they started changing the rules, and rewrote the *Shastras*, the *Smruthis*. The first letdown for a woman was when they declared that a woman cannot wear a sacred thread. They went further, saying that the only way a woman could attain to *mukti* or her Ultimate Nature was by serving her husband. There was no other way, they decided.

During the Vedic times, a woman could dissolve her family whenever she wanted. As a man had the freedom, a woman also had this same freedom.

Once she felt she had grown out of the need, she left it, the same way a man was doing. This was perfectly accepted during the Vedic times. Somewhere along the way, somebody fixed it that only a man could renounce.

Unfortunately, even today, in the twenty-first century, the same continues. It has been made clear that the moment you are born as a woman, you are born either to serve your father or your husband. Beyond that, you have nothing else. This has been taught by people who are talking about *advaita*, the non-duality of existence, that everything is one, but a woman is less. I don't know what sense it made to them. Nobody can be an *advaitist*, nobody can be a non-dual person if he cannot even accept a sexual difference out of which he has come. He knows his existence depends upon the woman and if he cannot accept her, his accepting all the dualities in the existence is simply out of question.

Now, it is not about a woman going out and doing what a man is doing. That will become obscene. This is happening in the West and to some extent here also. Women are trying to become like men. If that happens, the damage will be even greater. If a woman loses her femininity, her feminine nature, she will become ugly. Why does she want to become like a man? Because somewhere she still thinks that she is inferior and man is superior, so she wants to become like him.

The question of inferiority or superiority only comes in a prejudiced mind. It is just a question of two qualities. It is not a question of who is inferior and who is superior.

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev is an international spiritual teacher and author, and is considered one of the foremost authorities on the path of yoga in the world today. This column is derived from Sadhguru's talks throughout the world. As someone with profound insights not only on spiritual and cultural issues but also on every aspect of contemporary life, Sadhguru's words have relevance for everyone. Khabar readers can also request Sadhguru's response to any particular question or issue in life that they feel concerned about. sadhguru@ishafoundation.org. Isha is offering "7-day Inner Engineering" program starting from September 12th at Global Mall in Norcross. Please visit www.ishayoga.org for more details.
