

Women: Protected or Independent?

Similarly, a welcome offered by unmarried girls who are internally and externally clean and are dressed in nice garments and ornaments is also auspicious. Kumari, or unmarried girls untouched by the hand of any member of the opposite sex, are auspicious members of society. Even today in Hindu society the most conservative families do not allow unmarried girls to go out freely or mix with boys. They are very carefully protected by their parents while unmarried, after marriage they are protected by their young husbands, and when elderly they are protected by their children. When thus protected, women as a class remain an always auspicious source of energy to man.

SB 4.21.4 purport

What is protection?

It is a sense of being loved and cherished

Actually the woman must always be protected by her husband. We always speak of the goddess of fortune as being placed on the chest of Narayana. In other words, the wife must remain embraced by her husband. Thus she becomes beloved and well protected. Just as one saves his money and places it under his own personal protection, one should similarly protect his wife by his own personal supervision. Just as intelligence is always within the heart, so a beloved chaste wife should always have her place on the chest of a good husband. This is the proper relationship between husband and wife. A wife is therefore called ardhangani, or half of the body. One cannot remain with only one leg, one hand or only one side of the body. He must have two sides. Similarly, according to nature's way, husband and wife should live together.

SB 4.26.17 purport

Sometimes we receive the complaint in foreign countries, they say that "You keep your women like slaves." I replied, "We do not keep our women as slaves. They're very respectful at home. The sons offer their highest respect to the mother. The husband gives the topmost protection to the wife."

Lecture on Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.7.43 -- Vrndavana, October 3, 1976

Why do women need protection?

1. From selfishness

Women are self-interested by nature, and therefore they should be protected by all means so that their natural inclination to be too self-interested will not be manifested. Women need to be protected by men. A woman should be cared for by her father in her childhood, by her husband in her youth and by her grown sons in her old age. .. Women must be cared for so that they will not be free to manifest their natural tendency for gross selfishness. .. This is not a criticism of women but a practical study of their nature. Such natural instincts of a woman or a man are manifested only in the bodily conception of life. When either a man or a woman is advanced in spiritual consciousness, the bodily conception of life practically vanishes. We should see all women as spiritual units (aham

brahmasmi), whose only duty is to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. Then the influences of the different modes of material nature, which result from one's possessing a material body, will not act.

SB 6.18.42 purport

2. To keep from being exploited

According to Manu-saṁhitā, every woman should be protected, either by her husband, by her father or by her grown sons. Without such protection, a woman will be exploited. Indeed, women like to be exploited by men. As soon as a woman is exploited by a man, she becomes a common prostitute.

SB 8.9.9 purport

Because women are easily seduced, the Manu-saṁhitā enjoins that they should not be given freedom. A woman must always be protected, either by her father, by her husband, or by her elderly son. If women are given freedom to mingle with men like equals, which they now claim to be, they cannot keep their propriety. The nature of a woman, as personally described by Uṛvaśī, is to establish false friendship with someone and then seek new male companions, one after another, even if this means giving up the company of a sincere well-wisher.

SB 9.14.38 purport

3. To be happy according to one's nature

We are actually to be predominated by Kṛṣṇa, but we are trying to be predominator. That is our fault. Don't try to be predominator. Try to be predominated by Kṛṣṇa and you will be happy. Just like the woman. As soon as she is under protection of a big father, a nice husband, and nice elderly son, she is happy, very happy. And as soon as she is independent... I have seen practically in Europe and America, there are so many women declared independence. They are most unhappy. I have seen it. In old age they are very, very unhappy. Young age also. They do not get a right husband, and they are very unhappy. When one young girl sees that another young girl has husband, she becomes, "Oh, so this woman, this girl has got a husband." You see. That is the nature.

Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 7.4-5 -- Bombay, March 30, 1971

4. As a foundation for spiritual progress

So modern civilization is not strictly following the Vedic injunction. Therefore, especially I have seen in the Western countries, there is no home practically. There is no homely happiness, because women are allowed to mix freely and there is no protection. They are not married, there is no husband. The father also does not take care. As soon as the girl becomes fifteen, sixteen years, she goes away. Therefore I have practically seen there is no home, there is no peace in the Western countries. These are very important things, that soft-hearted woman, vama-svabhava, they should be given protection. They should be trained up how to become faithful wife, affectionate mother. Then the home will be very happy,

and without happiness we cannot make any spiritual progress. We must be peaceful. This is the preliminary condition.

Lecture on Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.7.43 -- Vrndavana, October 3, 1976

The ultimate protection is in Krishna consciousness

Here in the Bhagavad-gita, He surpasses all these formalities. Lord Krsna surpasses all these formalities. He is giving facility to everyone. Never mind what he is. In the social structure, you may consider that woman is less intelligent or sudra or less purified, but in spiritual consciousness there is no such bar. Here Krsna accepts everyone. Either you become woman or you are sudra or a vaisya or whatever you may be, that doesn't matter. If you simply take to Krsna consciousness, the Lord is there. He will give you all protection, all protection, and gradually He will help you. You are already...

One who is in the Krsna consciousness platform, he is already in the liberated platform.

Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 9.29-32 -- New York, December 20, 1966

What about modern society where sometimes these arrangements don't work out?