

# **MY MOTHER INDIA**

*by*

**DALIP SINGH SAUND, M.A., PH.D.**

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*Dedicated to  
my beloved friend Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind*

## PREFACE

This work was undertaken at the request of THE PACIFIC COAST KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY, commonly known as the SIKH TEMPLE at Stockton, California. The original plan was to write a comprehensive reply to Katherine Mayo's book MOTHER INDIA, which was changed later to one of producing a handbook on India for general use by the American public. In view of the momentous changes of worldwide interest, which have taken place in India during recent years, the need for such a book was quite imminent. And it was only fitting that THE PACIFIC COAST KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY, in its role as the interpreter of Hindu culture and civilization to America, should undertake its publication.

Only a few years ago, India, like other countries of the Orient, was a far Eastern problem. To-day, if rightly judged, it has already become a near Western issue. Except for the few scholars of oriental history and literature, who occupied themselves diligently in exploring the hidden treasures of Hindu civilization, the name of India was an unknown thing to the rest of the American world. For the average man and woman in the United States the affairs of that oriental country were too remote an issue for them to notice. With the advances made by science during recent times, however, different parts of the world have become so near together, and their business and cultural relations have grown so desperately interlaced, that the affairs of one section of the globe cannot, and should not, remain a matter of comfortable unconcern for the other. It

has been my aim in the preparation of this book to answer the various questions that commonly arise in the minds of the American people regarding the cultural and political problems of India. And if I have succeeded in bringing about a better understanding of India by the people of America, I consider myself amply repaid.

Wherever feasible I have made free uses of striking passages and phrases from the writings of several authors. Since these were copied from my notes gathered during a course of study extending over several years, it has not always been possible for me to trace the source, for which I wish to be humbly excused.

I wish to express my sincerest appreciation to my beloved wife for her untiring assistance in the preparation of the manuscript and the reading of the proofs. I wish also to thank my friend Mr. Anoop Singh Dhillon for valuable suggestions.

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DALIP SINGH SAUND.

# CHAPTER I

## WOMAN'S POSITION IN INDIA. IS SHE BOND OR FREE?

*“Where women are honored,  
there the gods are pleased;  
but where they are dishonored,  
no sacred rite yields reward.”*

Thus, in the year 200 B. C., wrote Manu, the great law-giver of India—India, whose mind was full grown when the western nations were yet unborn; India, whose life rolled on while the West, like the dragon fly, lived and died to live again. While Europe was still in a state of primitive barbarism, the Indo-Aryans of *Bharat* (India) had reached an elevated state of moral and spiritual perfection; and in the realm of intellectual culture they had attained an eminence which has not yet been equalled by the most advanced of western countries. Not only had they a perfect alphabet and a symmetrical language, but their literature already contained models of true poetry and remarkable treatises on philosophy, science, and ethics when the forefathers of the modern western nations were still clothed in skins and could neither read nor write. In their firm grasp of the fundamental meaning and purpose of life, and in the organization of their society with a view to the full attainment of the fruits of life, namely, “to take from each according to his capacity, and to give to each according to his needs,” they had attained to a high degree of excellence, which has been recognized by the greatest of both western and

oriental scholars. Says Max Müller, the noted scholar of oriental languages:

“If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.”[\[1\]](#)

Further, of the culture of this ancient people of India Sir Monier-Williams, sometime Boden Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford, famous translator of Sanskrit drama, and author of many works on history and literature, speaks from an intimate knowledge of India derived from long residence in the country when he writes:

“Indeed, I am deeply convinced that the more we learn about the ideas, feelings, drift of thought, religious and intellectual development, eccentricities, and even errors of the people of India, the less ready shall we be to judge them by our own conventional European standards—the less disposed to regard

ourselves as the sole depositories of all the true knowledge, learning, virtue and refinements of civilized life—the less prone to despise as an ignorant and inferior race the men who compiled the laws of Manu, one of the remarkable productions of the world—who composed systems of ethics worthy of Christianity—who imagined the *Ramayna* and *Mahabharata*, poems in some respects outrivalling the Iliad and the Odyssey—who invented for themselves the sciences of grammar, arithmetic, astronomy, logic, and six most subtle systems of philosophy. Above all, the less inclined shall we be to stigmatize as benighted heathen the authors of two religions, however false, which are at this moment professed by about half the human race.” [2]

Such a civilization has built up the enormous literature of the Hindus embodied in the *Vedas*, *Upnishads*, the epic poems of *Ramayna* and *Mahabharata*, and the immortal works of Kalidasa, a literature comprising in itself an achievement of the human mind which may be considered sublime, and of which any civilization, ancient or modern, may feel justly proud. The poetical merit of Kalidasa’s *Sakuntala* is universally admitted, and it ranks among the best of the world’s masterpieces of dramatic art. Its beauty of thought and its tenderness in the expression of feeling are exquisite, while its creative fancy is rich, and the charm of its spirit is full. Says Goethe:

*“Wouldst thou the life’s young blossoms and the fruits of its  
decline,  
All by which the soul is pleased, enraptured, feasted, fed,—  
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sweet name*



*combine?*

*I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said."*

The epic poems of *Ramayna* and *Mahabharata* consist of stories and legends which form a splendid superstructure on the teachings contained in the earlier scriptures of the *Vedas*. By relating what the men and women of those times thought, said, and did, these poems illustrate in a highly instructive manner the general character and culture of the early Hindus. The stories contained in these poems, which, in fact, rival the best known epic poems of the world, tell us of the thoughts and beliefs, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows of the people of this earliest recorded period. Through these stories we learn the fundamental concepts which governed the religious and social life of the early Hindus; in them are revealed also the basic moral and spiritual laws which controlled the actions, "not only of gods and supernatural men, but of ordinary men and women of India." "They explain—by showing the degrees of danger incurred by such vices as anger and pride, deception and faithlessness, intemperance and impiety—the evil consequences of moral transgressions from both man-made and supernatural laws; and at the same time they emphasize the beauty of such virtues as patience and self-control, truthfulness and purity, obedience and filial love." [3]

As an illustration of the fascinating and elevated nature of its lofty idealism, we shall quote two passages from *Ramayna*. In the first, Rama, the ideal king, has determined to execute the will of his late father by staying in the forests as an exile for fourteen years. Sita, his wife and the heroine of the story, begs her lord and husband to allow her to accompany him in his

exile to the forests and offers a picture highly expressive of pious conjugal love. Sita says:

*“Thou art my king, my guide, my only refuge, my divinity.  
It is my fixed resolve to follow thee. If thou must wander forth  
Through thorny trackless forests, I will go before thee, treading  
down  
The prickly brambles to make smooth thy path. Walking before  
thee, I  
Shall feel no weariness: the forest thorns will seem like silken  
robes;  
The bed of leaves, a couch of down. To me the shelter of thy  
presence  
Is better far than stately palaces, and paradise itself.  
Protected by thy arm, gods, demons, men shall have no power to  
harm me.  
Roaming with thee in desert wastes, a thousand years will be a  
day;  
Dwelling with thee, e’en hell itself would be to me a heaven of  
bliss.”*

In the second selection Rama is heard answering to the entreaties of Bharata, who has tried in vain to dissuade him from carrying out his design. The following is Rama’s answer to the messenger of Bharata:

“The words which you have addressed to me, though they recommend what *seems* to be right and salutary, advise, in fact, the contrary. The sinful transgressor, who lives according to the rules of heretical systems, obtains no esteem from good men. It is good conduct that marks a man to be noble or ignoble, heroic or a pretender to manliness, pure or impure.

Truth and mercy are immemorial characteristics of a king's conduct. Hence royal rule is in its essence *truth*. On truth the world is based. Both sages and gods have esteemed truth. The man who speaks truth in this world attains the highest imperishable state. Men shrink with fear and horror from a liar as from a serpent. In this world the chief element in virtue is truth; it is called the basis of everything. Truth is lord in the world; virtue always rests on truth. All things are founded on truth; nothing is higher than it. Why, then, should I not be true to my promise, and faithfully observe the truthful injunction given by my father? Neither through covetousness, nor delusion, nor ignorance, will I, overpowered by darkness, break through the barrier of truth, but remain true to my promise to my father. How shall I, having promised to him that I would thus reside in the forests, transgress his injunction, and do what Bharata recommends?"

In *Mahabharata* again we find proof of the high esteem in which the manly virtues of truthfulness, charity, benevolence, and chivalry towards women were held by the ancient Hindus. The most important incident in the drama (*Mahabharata*), namely, the death of Bhishma, occurred when this brave and virtuous man, in fidelity to his pledge never to hurt a woman, refused to fight, and was killed by a soldier dressed in a woman's garb.

The drama is full of moral maxims, around each one of which the poet has woven a story in a beautiful and elegant manner.

"If Truth and a hundred horse sacrifice were weighed together, Truth would weigh the heavier. There is no virtue equal to Truth, and no sin greater than falsehood."

“For the weak as well as for the strong, forgiveness is an ornament.”

“A person should never do to others what he does not like others to do to him, knowing how painful it is to himself.”

“The man who fails to protect his wife earns great infamy here, and goes to hell afterwards.”

*“A wife is half the man, his truest friend;  
A loving wife is a perpetual spring  
Of virtue, pleasure, wealth; a faithful wife  
Is his best aid in seeking heavenly bliss;  
A sweetly-speaking wife is a companion  
In solitude, a father in advice,  
A mother in all seasons of distress,  
A rest in passing through life’s wilderness.”*

These great epic poems have a special claim to our attention because they not only illustrate the genius of a most interesting people, but they are to this day believed as entirely and literally true by the vast population of India. “Huge congregations of devout men and women listen day after day with eager attention to recitations of these old national stories with their striking incidents of moral uplift and inspiration; and a large portion of the people of India order their lives upon the models supplied by those venerable epics.”

The subjection of woman was accepted as a natural thing by the entire West until very recent times. Woman was held in the eyes of the law as no better than a slave, and she was considered useful in society merely to serve and gratify man,

her master. Truly, such a condition forms a dark page in the history of the race. Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, in her foreword to Mill's *Subjection of Women*, writes:

“In defense of these expressions [subjection and slavery used in Mill's essay] and the general character of the essay, it must be said that the position of women in society at that time [1869] was comparable to that of no other class except the slave. As the slave took the name of his master so the woman upon marriage gave up her own and took that of her husband. Like the slave, the married woman was permitted to own no property; as, upon marriage, her property real and personal, and all she acquired subsequently by gift, will, or her own labour, was absolutely in her husband's control and subject to his debts. He could even will away her marriage portion and leave her destitute. The earnings of the slave belonged to the master, those of the wife to the husband. Neither slave nor wife could make a legal contract, sue or be sued, establish business, testify in court, nor sign a paper as a witness. Both were said to be 'dead in law'.

“The children of the slave belonged to the master; those of the wife to the husband. Not even after the death of the husband was the wife a legal guardian of her own children, unless he made her so by will. While living he could give them away, and at death could will them as he pleased. He dictated the form of education and religion that they should be taught, and if the parents differed in religion, the wife was forced to teach the husband's faith. Like the slave, if the wife left her husband she could take nothing with her, as she had no legal claim to her children, her clothing, nor her most personal possessions.

“The law in many lands gave husbands the right to whip their wives and administer other punishments for disobedience, provided they kept within certain legal restrictions. Within the memory of those living in Mill’s day, wife-beating was a common offense in England and America, husbands contending that they were well within their ‘rights’, when so doing.

“ ... Education, always considered the most certain sign of individual advancement, was either forbidden or disapproved, for women. No colleges and few high schools, except in the United States, were open to women. Common schools were less usual for girls than for boys and the number of totally illiterate women vastly exceeded the number of illiterate men. Religion was recommended to women as a natural solace and avenue of usefulness, but they were not permitted to preach, teach, or pray in most churches, and in many singing was likewise barred! The professions and more skilled trades were closed to them.”

That such a state of things was ever tolerated in the advanced countries of Europe and America seems to us of India incredible. But it is, nevertheless, true. As in the case of other social laws, the subjection of woman was the result of the fundamental ideals (or the lack of ideals) which governed the western society of those times. Men were still in that low state of development in which “Might was Right,” and in which the law of superior strength was the rule of life. No pretension was made to regulate the affairs of society according to any moral law. The physical law which sanctioned traffic in human slaves, at the same time sustained the bondage of the weaker sex.

We now live in an age where the law of the strongest, in principle at least, has been abandoned as the guiding maxim of life. It is still very widely practised in individual as well as in national relationships, but always under the guise of higher social and cultural ends. The law of force as the avowed rule of general conduct has given place to ideals of social equality, human brotherhood, and international goodwill. How far such ideals are being actively followed by the different peoples of the world remains to be determined; but their profession as the symbol of good culture, at least, is universal.

The emancipation of woman in the West is thus a very recent achievement. Yet it is rightly considered by most thinkers the greatest single step forward in the advancement of the human race. Its tremendous importance in the future development of the race is realized now by all classes of people over the entire world. In fact, the social status of woman in any society is regarded by most people, and properly so, as the test of its civilization.

Through what hardships and dangers, privations and humiliations ran the thorny and uphill path of the early leaders of the women's suffrage movement. The deeds of true nobility and heroic determination that were performed by the pioneers of women's emancipation are very little known to the average man and woman of the present day. How numerous and difficult were the obstacles placed in the way of these pioneers by their brow-beating opponents, how bitter was the nature of their persecutions, how mean and foul the character of the insults offered them, and blind and obstinate the attitude of the

governing class to their simple demand for justice are little realized by those who enjoy the legacy left by those liberators.

The high idealism which inspired the movement of the militant suffragettes in England is manifest in their every word and action. Their methods of peaceful, silent, dignified, conscious and courageous suffering, contrasted with the treacherous, cowardly, shameful, unmanly, and brutal attacks of their opponents, have received considerations of high merit from all sections of honest and fair-minded men the world over. Virtuous women belonging to the highest stations in life and possessing qualities of rare courage, purity, and self-denial were attacked in the most cowardly fashion by bands of strong-bodied hooligans, "felled to the ground, struck in the face, frog-marched, and tossed hither and thither in a shameless manner." "The women speakers were assaulted with dead mice and flocks of live mice, and flights of sparrows were let loose into their meetings. Paid gangs of drunken men were dispatched to the women's gatherings to sing obscene songs, and drown the voices of the speakers with the rattle of tin cans and the ringing of bells. Bands of suffragettes were attacked, struck down unconscious, and driven out over wet roads covered with carbide by gangs of Liberal volunteers. Suffragette leaders were imprisoned in the jails of England in groups of hundreds at a time and were meted out the fancy punishment of forcible feeding through a tube inserted into the stomach, a process which causes intense and lingering pain." [4] This barbarous treatment excited at once the horror and indignation of the whole civilized world. Yet all these brutalities were carried on under the very nose, in fact, at the



direction of the full-fledged Liberal members of the British cabinet.

At a campaign meeting held in Swansea where the suffragettes attempted to ask Mr. Lloyd-George questions regarding his attitude on the problem of woman franchise, he is reported as having used such language as, "sorry specimens of womanhood," "I think a gag ought to be tried," "By and by we shall have to order sacks for them, and the first to interrupt shall disappear," "fling them ruthlessly out," and, "frog-march them." At another meeting held in Manchester, February 4th, 1906, where Mr. Winston Churchill spoke, on asking a very simple question, the fourteen year old daughter of Mrs. Pankhurst, Adela, was savagely attacked, thrown down, and kicked by several men.

The unwholesome and bitter experiences of the peaceful and gentle suffragettes at the two election campaigns in May, 1907, are described by Miss Sylvie E. Pankhurst as follows:

"After these stormy meetings the police and hosts of sympathisers always escorted us home to protect us from the rowdies. Just as we reached our door there was generally a little scuffle with a band of youths who waited there to pelt us with sand and gravel as we passed.... At Uppingham, the second largest town, the hostile element was smaller than at Oakham, but its methods were more dangerous. While Mary Gawthorpe was holding an open-air meeting there one evening, a crowd of noisy youths began to throw up peppermint 'bull's eyes' and other hard-boiled sweets. 'Sweets to the sweet,' said little Mary, smiling, and continued her argument, but a pot-egg, thrown

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