

AN APPEAL

TO THE

NATIVE GENTLEMEN OF BOMBAY,

ON

FEMALE EDUCATION:

BEING A LECTURE DELIVERED BY THE REV. T. K. WEATHERHEAD, S.C.L.,
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GENTLEMEN,

I TAKE UP the subject of Female Education entirely on the ground of its vast importance, and for the purpose of leading, if possible, to some greater exertions in its behalf. I do not at all expect to do justice to it, to touch it in all its parts, or even in its most prominent, but an attempt must be made, and if in any degree I can stir up the thinking mind of Bombay upon this point, and lead to something more being done, the lecture will not be in vain.

I do not believe any of these lectures are in vain, they may be perhaps only like drops falling into a bucket, but each drop is doing its work, it is helping to fill up the measure, and the day must come when being full and running over a channel will be needed to direct it to useful fields. It will be a day of woe to India, if all the benefits of education in ten years' time manifest no greater fruit than at present. It will be a sad day if the rising generation, now so full of mental power, do not acquire also a moral power, and assert their freedom over the prejudices and follies of old age, ignorance, and caste. It is sad to contemplate! It is always so to me. Young Bombay appears like a man of ability who lacks *moral* courage. He will talk in the assembly and amidst the multitude and the throng, but when called upon to go and do—go and be,—go and live,—go and be real,—go and act,—go and save his country; he shrinks back. My friends, if you love your race and your country, you will not allow this reproach to remain upon you. It is of no use crying "Reform" if you do not reform. It is ridiculous to call a talker, a speechifier, a chatter-box a reformer. Speech is a great power, but action is more powerful. Look at Luther. He was a Reformer; and what is the first question we ask about him? Is it, what did he say, what did he talk about? How did he talk? No, but what did he do? And so to you. The question we ask is, What are the Hindoo Reformers doing? You are perhaps Reformers, what are you doing?

Let not then what may be suggested this evening end in talk, let something be done. With your own wife, sisters, children, let a beginning be made. You experience in yourselves the blessings of education, extend such to those who rest upon you and look up to you.

There are peculiar difficulties surrounding this subject owing to the closed doors of Hindoo homes to all European society. Even if we call to see any one of you present, or other Native gentlemen, the ladies run away as though some dangerous person had entered, and even if by chance with our wife we should meet yours, it is only a formal visit.

There is no permission to see the workings of the household, or opportunity to sympathise with anything going on, no chance of interchange of thought. And why is this? Because of caste! We cannot eat together or even drink together. Some of you, I know, will in private, but your wives won't. They will almost leave you rather than do as you do. How, then, can I make such suggestion as may be suited to the case? It is rather a subject for one of you, and I hope it will be taken up, and a lecture be delivered in this Hall, and some practical step taken.

But this very difficulty suggests the first point, *the right position of woman.*

Here at once I say, "she is the help-meet of man." That was her title and her character when first formed. What does it mean? A help suited to man, fitted in all such various ways as to meet man in his calling as a help. Is he called to eat and drink, she is a help-meet for him. Is he called to endure trial and trouble, she is a help-meet for him. Is he called to deep thought and earnest meditation and still more earnest work, she is a help-meet for him. Does he need recreation and comfort after his toils, she is a help-meet for him. Thus as regards daily sustenance, daily trial, daily labour, and daily recreation and relaxation woman is a help-meet. This is her special mission, a help-meet for man.

Let me explain briefly these four points; first, help-meet as regards his daily sustenance. By this, I do not mean she is to cook his food, to devote her time to that; this depends upon position and circumstances; but it is her place and duty to *provide* the food, to order its preparation, and to do all in such a way as will meet the demands and necessities of her husband, he providing the means. She thus relieves him of all this care and labour, and by so much helps and comforts him. This is recognised everywhere. There may be a large establishment of servants, and there may be one over all in *full trust*, to whom all is entrusted, yet in such a case this *one* is under the lady of the house.

And here I would add that this holds by no means a second place in her calling. We cannot exist without food, and if we look at things as they really are, we must say, eating and drinking is half the battle of life. It is easy to say, that little ought to suffice, but we see it does not suffice, it is waste of time to theorise when daily practice with its thousand facts stare us in the face. The wheel of society runs on so smoothly because these things are now in such order and follow in such routine, are in fact in a groove; and this groove have good earnest women made, who have managed and do manage their households well. But the ruling spirit in all of these is the woman. And where she does this to the satisfaction of her husband, she is in a true sense a help-meet. If the importance of this point is disputed let such look at the household not well ordered. Let them see the face of the husband returning home to an untidy house and no food ready at the appointed time. Let them look at the faces of all in the house. Surely a look will suffice.

2nd. As regards *daily trial*.

All have trials, men, women and children. Our Scriptures tell us, "that men are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," this is a remark arising out of experience and observation. In short this world is a world of probation. We who are Christians regard it as such. Looking at life then in this its ordinary aspect, and seeing woman is given as a help-meet to man, we say there is to be found in her certain qualities and affections admirably suited to help man in his perplexities. In perplexities and trials we need comfort, soothing, suggestion, advice. All of these may be found in the woman. That is to say, God has endowed her with certain qualities which wonderfully help. As a comforter, she is so quick in feeling that she, by instinct, knows when silent acts do more than words, or when words may be needed. She is endowed with a tact to turn aside the thoughts to other subjects, with affection to draw out affection, and thus for a time drive away care and anxiety, and how very valuable is such help. The man comes home with some care or trial, he sits down, broods over it, becomes melancholy, his wife sees the anxious brow and sad expression, and shares the trouble, but instead of yielding to grief, she cheers herself first and by degrees takes off the thoughts of her husband from his trouble, and affords him relaxation from the worry of his anxieties. Thus he is refreshed by the *forgetting* of his care, and when again it is returned to, his mind being freed from a fetter,

he perhaps sees that which caused him distress in another light. The help given to men in this way is incalculable. Many a man, I believe, has been saved from a rash act, and a deep fall by the comforting and soothing genius of a loving mother, wife, or sister. She may not have removed the cause of the trial, but will have given a new spirit to meet it, or have removed some obscurity that clouded the vision. How many a private history could furnish interesting materials to fill up this with illustration.

All I would call your particular attention to is this, as a fact; that it is part of woman's sphere, as part of her character to help him in his daily trials, and she is admirably fitted by the Almighty as a help-meet in this sense.

But more by suggestion and advice! Some may think this out of woman's province, but they have an intuitive power which men have not. Men go through certain steps in reason reaching their conclusion, women reach it at once by a kind of instinct. This has often been written upon. Hence I added suggestion and advice under the head of "help-meet in trial." You know that many difficulties are often met by the simplest means; and the very simplicity often prevents their suggesting themselves to the mind. Man seems fond of thinking all obstruction must be great difficulty. Now woman who knows scarcely anything perhaps of the subject is just the very person in many cases to give help. The trial is told, and a suggestion is made which often meets the case, but which never occurred before, and which presents itself to her unfettered mind, because it is preserved from prejudice.

3rd. Next she is a help-meet to him in his daily toils, let those be what they may, literary, scientific, mercantile or manual. How? do you ask. By taking upon herself all the various little duties of household and society which in a hundred ways would interrupt and annoy. She steps in, and is recognised as the representative, and in proportion to her abilities, education, and natural tact will be her usefulness here. And there is a wider field here than may at first appear, her influence may be like a connecting link binding together the various parts of society.

Lastly, she is a help-meet for him in his hours of recreation and relaxation. Here she is almost supreme, by her presence refining and purifying; the beauty and grace of person, and intelligent conversation giving lightness and ease to a mind worried by business

cares, or oppressed by wearing thought. Men will all delight in the conversation of a bright cheerful intelligent woman, and will feel themselves quickened.

Thus is woman fitted by the Almighty as a help-meet for man. And this fitness, or the gifts bestowed making this fitness, is *not given by Education, but drawn out by Education*. I would have you mark this. As I have heard it said by some native gentlemen, "our ladies are not like yours," intimating that it is of no use attempting to make them equally help-meets in their homes, in the capacities of wives, mothers, or daughters. This is an assertion which must be at once cleared away, and not by counter assertion, but by fact. And where is the fact? Why in the persons of some educated women in your country. If I can point to *one* only, it will suffice for my argument, for upon that one I can ask,—Wherein differs she from others? And if her circumstances are not extraordinary or even ordinary, I may ask with yet more confidence,—Wherein differs she from the thousands around? Wherein does she differ in nature and natural gifts? I myself am unable to discover any difference. What then has made her so much in advance, how comes she to know perhaps the English language thoroughly and to have acquired so much valuable information? And I *can* point not to one only, but to several. Therefore that native saying,—“Our ladies are not like yours,” in the sense of not having abilities to become like them, is without foundation.

But I would answer the question “What has made some women so much in advance of others?”

1st.—They hold their right position in the family amongst husband, father, brothers.

2dly.—They have had the advantages of education.

3rdly.—They have not been hindered from applying themselves to various duties and spheres of usefulness.

These are the three points I am going to urge upon you as absolute not only to woman's progress but to man's.

1st.—Give woman her *right position*.

2nd.—*Educate her*, so that all her natural gifts suited to her position may be drawn out.

3rd.—*Give her freedom* to exercise her gifts.

Not one of these is at present to be found in native families, excepting where such families have become Christian. And I

thank God that the very genius and spirit of the Christian religion is to advance man and woman, to improve their condition on earth, to lead on civilization, and to give it its firmest foundation. And hence all efforts of missionaries are benevolent and philanthropic to say the least, and are far from chimerical. They have never yet been in vain, ultimately they must prevail, and the open, unfettered, unprejudiced Hindoo will yet acknowledge it.

Now then, 1st, I entreat you to give to woman her *right position*, and as a first step, I ask you to bear with me on this point, it is a fundamental one. *It will never be a great practical thing till the wife sits down to the same meal and at the same time with the husband.* I am taking the bull by the horns as we say. But what can be done so long as things remain as they are? So long as the man is lord and sovereign, and woman is slave and servant; so long as man holds himself so mightily superior, that he will not admit woman to the same table, or to sit in the same carriage, or to appear together in public? Look at this Hall. Why are no native ladies present? Some will say in reply, because they will not come and do not choose to come? But I ask again, Why? I know two or three instances where native ladies would have come. I know of instances where such have visited European ladies, and continued to do so for some time, some months, and at last ceased, they came not; the reason was asked, and the reply was, they were laughed at, they were accused of attempting to adopt European customs, they were frowned upon. And this reply accounts for their absence now. The whole burden is thus thrown back upon man, and till man takes the matter up in earnest, and begins at this point, in his own quiet circle and family, and thus gradually accustoms all the females of the house to eat and drink with the males, what can be done?

I place this first because I hold it to be first. Let woman feel her social position is thus high, and there will be an inducement to seek means of fitting herself for it, for it will not simply be merely eating and drinking, but conversing together. She will certainly lose much of the sense of degrading inferiority, and in proportion as you remove this, you remove hindrances, and you allow nature to assert her rights: I have seen a flower struggling from underneath a large piece of rock, and just at its edge reaching into the light and then beginning to open its glories. I have seen the stone removed, and the consequence has been the plant became erect, it

increased and put forth many blooms and much fragrance. I apply this, I have seen one or two who are thus struggling from underneath the great burden of prejudice and custom, and just reaching its edge, giving signs of intellectual life and a readiness for social intercourse. (But I saw no more. I have not seen the stone removed. This is for you to do, and I unhesitatingly predict, when bad customs and depressing prejudices are removed, the female mind and heart of this country will be found as fully capable of performing their parts as any of their European sisters.

Now for a suggestion how to begin. We admit the difficulties, we admit there is the strong will of the woman backed by superstition, which again in its turn is supported by ignorance, to contend with. But a beginning must be made, and the determined rule of man must be observed. If the elder branches of a family refuse, the younger may be influenced. Let then all the daughters eat and drink with the father and brothers, let him carry on this perseveringly, let him also daily strive to win his wife, never giving in, striving under a deep conviction that it is his country's welfare that he is seeking. His striving cannot be in vain, it must and will assuredly have its influence, and in the end prevail.

But it may be urged all these customs are part of religion. Is it so really? A lecture delivered here not long ago, told us that years ago, the position of woman in Hindoo society was not what it now is. That Mahometan rule first began the degradation, and indifference and ignorance have perpetuated it. Therefore I question the religious bond in the matter,—Retrace the steps—give up indifference, —put aside the degradation. *Be as you were hundreds of years ago.* Shall I say so? No! You can reach far higher, and I would have you rest short of none but the highest standard, because I believe the women of this country capable of attaining unto that highest standard. (This is the first point. Eat and drink together, be equal in this, be sociable.)

And now I pass on to the second point. Having raised woman to her right position draw out all the great gifts and powers which God has given her to make her a help-met for man. *Educate her.*

The importance of this is daily growing amongst the educated of India, and the Metropolitan of India passed a high compliment on Bombay last January when he said, that Bombay was in advance of Bengal in female education. But this at the same time tells us

how little is really being done. And one feature of the teaching as far as I can judge from the paper put into the hands of the visitors at the examination referred to I must notice. That paper was full of the grossest superstition and idolatry. Now why do I thus speak? To point out what some of our people would call "inconceivable inconsistency." Here are educated gentlemen, admitting the follies and errors of superstition and idolatry, themselves deploring these fetters, longing to rid themselves of these clogs and drags upon progress, and calling themselves Reformers, actually instilling into the minds of those who are to rear and bring up children, all these same deplorable, obstructive, and debasing ideas. Why, gentlemen, you could not take a more sure course for preserving the old state of things than this! Rear the rising female generation in superstition, and you will perpetuate it, or at the least throw back advance and progress for many many years. Is it not necessary to so free the mind, that it may be able to discriminate between fact and fiction, between real and unreal, and not to lead it into the fields of imagination, and call into exercise a faith in a creed, before the mind can understand it. I maintain that your religion more especially calls for this waiting time and care, as you yourselves declare it to be deeply philosophical. If you wish your religion to bear any character beyond that of blind superstition, you ought to put a stop to its being taught by its fables and its absurdities to the children now growing up. It is very different with the Christian religion, here are facts and histories to be taught, these are stored up in the mind, and in due time the mind is asked to examine the bearing of these facts. There is an appeal to reason. But when I have asked the meaning of some of your rites and ceremonies, and why they are performed, I have never received a reasonable answer. I would therefore urge upon your consideration the revision of the books taught in your girls' schools. There will be a battle hard and severe enough at home to fight, without backing it up with erroneous teaching in schools. Of course it is admitted, that to read, to write, to reckon are not the aims of education, but to lead to think, to examine, compare, infer, and these correctly.

Now this cannot be done to any purpose without a great effort on the part of the Reformers. In fact I am met by obstacles at every step, and which make the subject such a difficult one. And here

there meets me *your early marriage custom*. What can a child learn by the time she is 13 or 14 years old? and this is I believe the extreme age. But this is not all, at the betrothal what takes place. I give you facts. In one school a little girl had been in the habit of attending regularly, and was beginning to take an interest in learning, she was about 7 years old. At this time she was married, and what followed? Her mother-in-law forbade her going to school, and there was an end of her prospects.

In the same school another little girl was met by her father-in-law just as she was coming away with the other girls, he was in his buggy, he saw her, got out, took this little daughter-in-law, beat her, and then wrote to the mother and forbade her going to school any more. Thus a prejudiced father-in-law counteracts all that the more liberal-minded father and mother of the poor child would do.

Again, I am informed that the mother-in-law constantly interferes with her new relation, requiring her to be with her to do all kinds of work, and insisting upon her accompanying her in all her various religious ceremonies. You alone know how far these can be remedied. It is a hopeless task to endeavour to teach a girl anything if at the age of 7, she has to begin to prepare herself for her new mode of life. Poor little thing, we can deeply pity her.

But there is one help, perhaps *one advantage*, in early marriages, so long as the present custom of parents deciding for their children remains, and that is, the husband has the opportunity of insisting upon his future sharer in life, making use of the intervening six or seven years for the purpose of education. I have been told an instance of a young man bringing his child-wife to school, and saying that he wished her to learn all she could. Cannot this example be followed? May not this be strained as an advantage out of what appears otherwise a pernicious and depressing system?

— But next, what is she to be taught?

I protest against the large amount of time spent in crochet and other kinds of fancy work. This is useful in its place, but it creates no character, draws out no great practical quality, prepares for no real usefulness. It gives no foundation for thought which shall lead to influential action upon those around. What is wanted is a knowledge which will fit for companionship, for bringing up children, for ruling her household, for taking an interest in the welfare of all people. An education then with this aim should be attempted. The

books therefore conveying information should be well chosen, chosen by a competent committee or teacher. And there should be certain definite aims, certain standards for the classes, there should be advance from class to class as from one set of books to another. I do not think that this is sufficiently attended to, and perhaps there is a cause. The cause of so much mischief in all educational efforts is the frequent change of schools, and the non-attendance, and this sometimes for weeks and even months. This desultory mode of learning can never attain to anything of worth. There must be punctuality, regularity and perseverance. These then I offer as needing attention.

1st.—Guard against too much fancy work.

2nd.—Give sound instruction based upon books universally acknowledged.

3rd.—Insist upon regularity and perseverance.

But 3rdly, when knowledge is acquired and the mind and heart have been educated, there must be *freedom for action*. Here I am met by that immense obstruction to every progress. I do not take up a watch-word when I mention the Caste system, but simply declare what every well-wisher to the natives of this country feels to be like a barricade raised around all the prevailing evil habits and customs. "It is the custom of our caste," or "it is allowed in our caste," or "it is not allowed," are answers sufficient to meet every objection to existing obstacles, and to quash every benevolent and wise suggestion. What is the use then of asking you to give freedom of action to the educated, to permit them to diffuse the benefits they have derived? Still I must ask you to do so. If you could give this freedom, how rapidly that which you all so ardently wish would be attained, and this is needed to the development of what education has unfolded and imparted. Look only around you. Look at your homes. How many of those who have learnt to read and write are able to do so now? You were anxious they should learn, you opened schools, wealthy gentlemen contributed liberally, rich prizes were given to stimulate to exertion, and girls acquired ability to read and write and work, and yet what is there to show for it when married. Nothing. Books are neglected, writing given up, and they gradually have become as they were before. Old prejudices have returned, and why? because, no encouragement was given to persevere,—no desire expressed by husband or father for their pro-

gress in knowledge, but the opposite. They were laughed at, pointed at, ridiculed.

I appeal therefore to those who are moving in these matters, and I say, that you are wasting your resources and your energies, unless you urge upon your wives and daughters the necessity of keeping up their studies, or at least of not allowing all the past to vanish away. Household duties do not take up all the time, especially with the well-to-do and wealthy, they have servants, there is therefore time with them.

I ask you, as a fact, if the chief cause of hindrance apart from caste is not the laugh of ridicule. And who is to blame? Men! men allow it, instead of encouraging and helping on, and showing a longing desire for their wives and daughters to progress, they manifest indifference, and of course the ladies soon discover this and naturally ask, 'What is the use of my learning to read or to write.' 'I am only laughed at.' 'My husband does not encourage me.' 'No one seems to approve.'

You must *do* more, gentlemen, if you have the welfare of your country at heart. It seems to me to rest *with you*, you must show the *strong hand*, you must *rule*, and you must *be obeyed*. But before this, you must free the heart and mind from all prejudice, and ask "What is right?" and then act according to the response. Is any system right which depresses and keeps back all progress? Is any system right which makes of woman a slave? Is any system right which restrains woman's influence and holds her back from improvement?

You will never have *your* right place till you give woman hers. Not no man in his family, nor any family in his nation, nor any nation in the scale of nations, will take his or their right place, unless woman has hers. She is a help-meet, she is necessary to man, she has her duties, her callings, her influence; restrain any of these, and you retard the work.

Take the case of the mother with her child. How much the child loses if the mother is ignorant, superstitious and indifferent. What a burden is put on that child. As it grows up and has opportunities of learning, how much it has to *unlearn*, how hard it is to forget and to forsake evil habits.

I will, in conclusion, ask you to point to any civilized country where woman is in the position in which she is in this country.

There is not one. It is impossible that it should be so. What I have already said, is simply a truth, woman's right position with the free exercise of her mind and affection is necessary to complete civilization. She must have her proper influence. And if you will read history carefully, I think you will find *the position of woman in the various stages of civilization has been the measure of that civilization.* So in England up to our present day, and so too in communities and in families. It is a fact that each man shall suffer in proportion as he disregards, debases, or degrades her who is made to be to him a help-meet and a blessing. God is on the watch. God's Providence is over all his works. Do not think that He will bless and honour any who degrade his works.

I have said enough. There is nothing to prevent the females of this land rising to the same position and the same attainments with those of the most civilized land. They have the same mind, the same faculties, the same heart. If they do not rise, if they do not help man, if they do not honour him by their intelligence and their enlightenment, the fault is not theirs; but man's.