

Destined for Glory!

by Kim Kerr

GLORY! We are created in the image of God, and as image-bearers our hearts long for the glory that we are called to – even destined for! In Colossians 1:27 we get just a glimpse of the promise awaiting us; “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.” C.S. Lewis splendidly describes our longing: “We are to shine as the sun, we are to be given the Morning Star. I think I begin to see what it means. In one way, of course, God has given us the Morning Star already; you can go and enjoy the gift on many fine mornings if you get up early enough. What more, you may ask, do we want? Ah, but we want so much more...we want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.”

True religion is ultimately a search for the glory of God. “To believe in a personal creator in whose image we are made, a creator whose nature and actions define goodness, is to believe that we are not sole masters of our own destinies.”

Rather than awakening the glory of God within the hearts of women, religion apart from a personal relationship with the Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, has repressed and even oppressed their very heart and soul. Certain religions have perhaps been the greatest perpetrators of oppression against women the world has ever known, forcing them into the abyss of destitute isolation and despair.

In these few short pages, I will attempt to reveal some of the abuse and neglect of women performed in the name of religion. In contrast, I will explore and document the love and beauty of Christ unlocked in the hearts of women through a personal relationship with Himself.

Women around the world are finding their destiny; our glory is only fulfilled and awakened as we see ourselves in the Story above all stories, the story of His Glory...a Story that will only be complete when we take our place as true worshipers of

our Lord Jesus Christ and tell of His Glory among the nations, connecting women globally and cross-culturally for the glory of God and the joy of all peoples!

HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, AND ISLAM

Hindus believe earthly life is cyclical; you are born again and again, the quality of these rebirths being dependent upon your karma in previous lives. There is no escaping your behavior.

Living a dharmic life (appropriate behavior for one’s station in life) and fulfilling your duty will enhance your chances of being born into a higher caste

and better circumstances. Going the other way, rebirth may take animal form, but it is only as a human that you will gain sufficient self-knowledge to escape the cycle of reincarnation and achieve moksha (liberation). Traditionally, women are unable to attain moksha.

Sometime between the years 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, the upper caste law codifier known as Manu produced the first compilation of Hindu law, which assigned to women the status of chattel: personal property or slave. Most Hindu traditions, for

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example, have maintained that people are born different because of their earned karma in previous lives. A soul is born a woman because of its bad karma. In order to have a higher rebirth as a man, she needs to earn good karma by doing the duties of her station in life: such as, to worship and serve her husband as her god. The husband is said to be the woman's god.

Through the 'window' of the husband (although he may be the greatest sinner and a great criminal), the woman contemplates the divine. He is still her god and she must worship him. But even that worship cannot bring to a woman liberation or moksha.

Although not as implacable as Hinduism, Buddhism holds women in religious oppression as well. The predominant division of Buddhism known as Mahayana excludes women, stating that they must seek a male rebirth before they can attain enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhism is practiced mainly in Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan.

Even modern Buddhism, which allows women to practice their religion, is repressive in keeping women from the ultimate reality of Christ.

Islam as a religion and even more so as a culture, regards women as property of men; their feelings, desires and moods are of no account. Islam is a total way of life that affects all aspects of being: public, private, and spiritual.

The following are examples of cultural expressions of the religious overtones of society.

VEILING OF WOMEN

"Good women are obedient. They guard their

unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, warn them and send them to their bedroom and beat them." Men are dominant; women are subordinate. "Restricting women is visibly symbolic and an easy assuagement, at no cost to those who enforce it."

Commonly known as Purdah, the practice of veiling women in Islamic nations has become almost a status symbol in Islamic nations today. "This is a world where a grandmother can be arrested and whipped with eighty lashes when a single lock of hair slips out from under her veil; where rape victims are imprisoned for "fornication"; where doctors surgically restore hymens on prospective brides because non-virgins can be killed by male relatives; and where American converts to Islam adopt the veil and accept their husbands' polygamy, yet still fear the increasing Islamic extremism."

MARRIED TO THE KORAN

Pakistani women suffer a cruel mockery at the hands of their families as they are forcibly married to the Koran. This is a cultural manifestation of religion, with no foundation at all in Islam. The wedding takes place when an extended family has no man for a woman to marry.

In order to avoid marrying outside the family and dividing the family's estate, she is forced to marry the Koran in a ceremony identical to a real wedding except the bridegroom is missing.

The bride is dressed in a wedding dress and guests are invited to a reception, with a ceremony very much like a real 'wedding.' Once wedded to the Koran, the girl is not allowed to leave her home or see an adult male, even on television, for the rest

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of her life. Instead, she is sentenced to a life of isolation and loneliness.

HONOR KILLINGS

Women are often the objects of violence, even torture, around the world. Violence against women feeds off discrimination, which legitimizes the violent appropriation of women's bodies for individual gratification or political ends. According to World Bank figures, at least 20 percent of women around the world have been physically abused or sexually assaulted. In India, studies have found that more than 40 percent of married women reported being kicked, slapped or sexually abused for reasons such as their husbands' dissatisfaction with their cooking or cleaning, jealousy, and a variety of other motives. For millions of women, the home is not a haven but a place of horror.

In every region of the world, girls and women of all ages are assaulted in the name of honor.

They are accused of bringing shame on their families and their community by their behavior. The regime of honor is unforgiving. Women on whom suspicion has fallen are not given an opportunity to defend themselves, and family members have no socially acceptable alternative but to remove the stain on their honor by attacking the woman. On my recent sabbatical in India, I learned of a young unmarried woman had released her infant for adoption to a maternity home/orphanage. Upon returning to her village, she discovered that her 'friends and family' had planned her demise by stoning, so she quickly set herself on fire.

SATI

Another form of violence common to an Indian woman is Sati. Sati is described as a Hindu

religious rite in which the widow was burnt to ashes on her dead husband's pyre. Basically the practice of Sati was believed to be a voluntary Hindu act in which the woman chooses to end her life with her husband after his death. But there were many incidences in which the woman was forced to commit Sati, sometimes even dragged against their wishes to the lighted pyre.

Millions of Indians, even today, deify her and worship as "Mother-goddess" (Sati-mata) a woman who immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Yet, no religious or secular tradition in the whole history of humankind has violated the individuality of a woman more than Sati. It implies that beyond her husband's death a woman's own life has no worth or meaning at all.

Committing Sati, Sushil Kumari said, guaranteed that a woman, her husband and seven generations of the family after her had a "direct passport" to heaven and would be released from the painful cycle of birth and rebirth.

ABORTION / INFANTICIDE

The plight of Indian women often begins before birth. The desire to have male children is so strong that the government of India had to pass legislation prohibiting the abortion of healthy pre-born babies simply because they are girls. 'Sex determination' clinics are also banned but abortions, following examinations in illegal ultrasound clinics or with portable ultrasound machines taken from village to village, continue. The killing of thousands of female fetuses in India each year has become a national scandal. A report states that out

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of one thousand abortions committed in a Bombay hospital following ultrasound to determine the sex of the child, 999 were female.

Enforcement of the 1994 law against sex-determination tests is weak unless the mothers come forward to complain. Most women cannot resist the relentless pressure to have a boy to please family members they depend on for economic survival.

A girl child's natal family frequently treats her as dispensable, seeing that she will leave anyhow and will not support parents in their old age. Along the way to her inevitable departure she will involve the family in the considerable expense of a dowry and wedding festivities. What use would it be, then, to care for her health and education in the same way that one would care for a boy's? What wonder, that the birth of a girl is often an occasion for sorrow rather than for rejoicing? As the old Indian proverb puts it, "A daughter born / to husband or death / She's already gone."

In June 1986, *India Today* published an explosive cover story entitled 'Born to Die' which estimated that six thousand female babies had been poisoned to death during the preceding decade in the district surrounding the town of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. The following story depicts the horror of this common practice:

"When Muthaye felt her first labor pains, about noon one day, she was taken into the home of a dai in a nearby village. She delivered a little girl at four that afternoon. Three hours later she returned home with the child. The next morning at dawn, the family gave the newborn some cow's milk mixed with five sleeping pills they had bought from a pharmacist in town. This was done inside one of the huts as the mother-in-law and

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both parents watched. The baby, they said, fell fast asleep. Two hours later she had stopped breathing."

As horrific as this is, for millions this seems a more peaceful and practical method than even selective-sex abortions. One mother said, "Abortion is costly, and you have to rest at home. So instead of spending money and losing income, we prefer to deliver the child and kill it."

DOWRY DEATHS

Girls are often seen as a burden on the family, not only because they leave the family when married, but also because an adequate dowry must be supplied. Consequently, girls may get less food and their education is neglected. "Women, in short, lack essential support for leading lives that are fully human. This lack of support is frequently caused by their being women. Thus, even when they live in a constitutional democracy such as India, where they are equals in theory, they are second-class citizens in reality."

Women are more likely to be undereducated, undernourished, and underprivileged simply because they are women. Today more than five thousand young Indian brides die a fiery death each year, as their husbands and in-laws set fire to them, seemingly in an accident in the kitchen. The 'dowry death' releases the family to seek another bride and another dowry. More of these cases are being prosecuted today, but very often the local authorities turn a blind eye. It is claimed that for every reported case, 299 go unreported and that only 5% of the reported cases are actually pursued through the legal system.

The Inestimable Value of a Woman from God's Perspective

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THE LORD GOD, Yahweh Elohim, formed man of dust from the ground according to Genesis 2:7, squeezing him into shape as a potmaker forming a pot of clay. But the same LORD 'fashioned' woman from the rib of man in Genesis 2:22. This Hebrew term 'fashioned' means to build a complex entity from scratch and is also used to describe the building of God's temple. Its use always implies something of high value and high complexity such as architectural art and masterpieces. Woman is considered a masterpiece physiologically, intuitively and spiritually.

The New Testament references this in 1 Peter 3:7 where the term implies a vessel of honor. Man

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is challenged to value and treasure woman, making an active decision to do so. She is to be proclaimed, praised and lifted up!

The bold statement of Scripture is that man is incomplete without woman! Genesis 2:18 states that woman was created by God to complement or complete him. The actual Hebrew term used translates as 'helpmeet' and is also translated in Old English as 'succor' or savior. The only other use of this term throughout Scripture refers to the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the Hebrew meaning suggests completer or one who succors; one who saves another from extremity and danger, and provides relief. Woman according to God's plan in creation literally saves man from ineffectiveness or inefficiency.

THE TURNING POINT— CHRIST ENTERS THE SCENE!

Scripture is replete with examples of the incredible worth of women to the kingdom of God and the unfolding of His plan on earth. However, the turning point is clearly reached when Christ comes on the scene and elevates women to their God-given place in His design.

Following this, women take their rightful place as joint heirs and co-laborers in first century missions endeavors. When Christ is exalted, women are held in indescribable, inestimable value; their potential is released as a sweet aroma and fragrance penetrating this world and the next with Christ's beauty "Books have been written about Jesus' relationship with women, but let us briefly remind ourselves of some of the ways in which he radically departed from Jewish tradition while on earth. He allowed women to travel with him and his disciples—even married women who possibly had children (Luke 8:1-3); spoke to them in public (John 4:7-27); discussed theological issues with them (John 11: 17-27); taught them (Luke 10:38-39); used women as models and in parables (Luke 8:43-49); gave a woman the responsibility to deliver the report of his resurrection to men (John 20:11-17)—and never gender-differentiated his teaching.

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Though Jesus didn't call women into the intimacy of the Twelve, neither did he include Gentiles—who were certainly to be involved in the leadership of the Church after his resurrection. Treating women as Jesus did starts by treating

them with respect as equals and as mature, gifted partners in the work he has instructed us to carry out.”

PAUL’S VIEW OF WOMEN

The apostle Paul has possibly received the most criticism in his Scriptural position to women. But could it be that he was in fact one of the greatest liberators of women as he clearly reflected the heart of the Lord towards women in spite of the times in which he lived? “Above all, he (the apostle Paul) believes that the advent of Christ meant that the barrier between Jews and other people, buttressed by a false understanding of the Law, has been torn down; he is prepared to stake his entire ministry on this fundamental tenet of the Christian faith. Since this conviction virtually consumes all his energy, it seems that other divisions are shunted into secondary place. Could it be that he regards these differences as social rather than theological? Be that as it may, recent studies have shown that women had a much higher profile in the Pauline communities than they had in contemporary Judaism.”

“Paul wrote that such discriminatory traditions had been demolished by the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ: ‘There is neither Jew, nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ (Galatians 3:28). Historian Thomas Cahill describes the Apostles’s radical, high view of women this way: “Paul insists (the first person in history to do so) on the essential equality of the sexes.”

Within the intellectual framework of the biblical worldview, equality means that

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although each individual is unique, what makes every human being a human and as valuable as anyone else, is God’s likeness in him/her, and Christ’s love for him/her.”

Christ is the exact representation of God’s glory according to the writer of Hebrews. Women have been given a significant role in displaying that glory. Our Lord trusted a woman enough to place within her the seed of all redemption, the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only so, but our Lord first appeared to women upon His

Resurrection. He said to them, “Do not be afraid, go and take My word to My brethren...” Matthew 28:10 “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said” (Luke 24:22-24).

Historically, women have comprised nearly two-thirds of the church and have played a major role in each era of history. Women are the key to the culture—they have an important and lasting influence on their children.

“Two-thirds of the Christian church, having this work in hand, are women, and few questions are better worth considering, how all that is in her, all that is distinctively, peculiarly feminine, may be wrought into this grand consummation, to accomplish which Christ came, and for which he waits, expecting until his enemies be made his footstool.

The interest of this problem is only equaled by its importance. How may a woman help Christ’s kingdom come? Is there

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any spring in the machinery, which only her fingers can touch and move? Are there any crooked or narrow places where only her feet can travel—any rough spots that only her touch may smooth—any low levels which only her hands can raise—any recesses of sin or sorrow where only her voice can be heard? Then, from her Master she hears her call, and from him receives her commission.”

Perhaps this is the key that unlocks the mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory! Perhaps only as we pursue the applause of One, do we see our glorious destiny in His story unfold. “And that is enough to raise our thoughts to what may happen when the redeemed soul, beyond all hope and nearly beyond belief, learns at last that she has pleased Him who she was created to please.”

It is in this moment that our heart responds much as Isaiah of old when He approached the incomprehensible glory of which the seraphim cry, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” And after confessing his personal unworthiness and receiving fresh cleansing and purifying cries out...Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:3, 8).

Then the glory of the Lord can be revealed as we humble ourselves to serve in His Name. “The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor’s glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken.” An example of just such a humble servant is Pandita Ramabai, whose story is told in *What Liberates A Woman*. “She was a pioneer, and her gift to India lies less in what she actually achieved, immense as that achievement was, than in the example of faith and courage that she gives India as she stands in the grey of its new

dawn. She had many notable qualities such, as for example, an “executive capacity” that, in the opinion of Professor Karve, ‘stands unparalleled in India’ but it is the strength and charm of her whole personality that win our admiration...Her soul was in its texture Indian and in her we see what such a soul may be under the control of Christ.”

By her life and words, Pandita revealed the true liberation which comes to a woman as she realized her worth and dignity in His eyes and attained true Swarjya (independence).

As women, we too can reflect the glory of the Lord as we are transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord (2 Cor.3: 18). “Glory, as Christianity teaches me to hope for it, turns out to satisfy my original desire and indeed to reveal an element in that desire which I had not noticed. By ceasing for a moment to consider my own wants I have begun to learn better what I really wanted.”

This is in essence the glory for which we are searching and for which our soul cries out! Only in Christ is our glory awakened, and only in Christ is our destiny fulfilled. Together we then cry out: “Glory to God in the church! Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus! Glory down all the generations! Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!” (Ephesians 3:21, *The Message*).

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