Challenge for Wife and Mother
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Kumaran, Savitri It is said in our scripture, The Holy Kural, "She is the helpful wife who possesses the fullness of household culture and spends within her husband's means...A worthy wife is the blessing of a home and good children are its precious ornament."

The woman, mother, indeed has an important role as the spiritual anchor of the home. Her attitudes and action help to form the attitudes of her children. The need for her to be at home with her children and to maintain the spiritual vibration of the home has been well established. However, the Hindu woman in the West, or even in urban India, faces a unique challenge that her mother and grandmother never had. She faces the challenge of her role virtually alone, without the support of the extended family. She has no mother, sister or even cousins close at hand from whom guidance can be sought, for she lives alone with her husband and children. The supportive nest of the extended family is not there. She may not even know other women in the community where she lives. Where then does she get her support? Does she have it all stored in her mind-how to raise her children, live on her budget, relate to her community? Unlikely! She must have the help of her husband.

Now, this gives the husband a new challenge, unknown in traditional village life. If the woman is the spiritual [?] flower of the home, the man, then, is the garden keeper. Anyone who keeps a garden knows that while a flower may be kept indoors to beautify a room, it will not thrive there for very long. It needs the sunshine, fresh air, rain and the presence of other plants in the garden to provide life-giving energies. It needs tender caring and nourishment and much love. These needs are not very different from those a of a woman.

The extended family seems to be the ideal way to meet the needs of a young mother. In the extended family home the young mother has the needed company, help and guidance when her babies are young. Her doubts and fears are removed

by the security of her family's traditions. She doesn't become lonely if her husband is working long hours. She has others around her who care about her and her children. The urban or Western woman does not always have this comfort.

This is when the responsibility of helping to maintain harmony comes to the husband. If the family is fortunate enough to live near a temple, the need to associate with other women can be met through a temple society that does service for the temple or perhaps has cooking or music classes available. A woman may need encouragement from her husband to belong to such an association. Perhaps he may even need to help care for the children so she may attend a class once or twice a week.

Although our Holy Kural rightly says, "`Sweet are the sounds of the flute and the lute,' say those who have not heard the prattle of their own children," if the prattle of children is all she ever hears, a mother may being to question her sanity. She needs her husband to talk to her, have pleasant conversations, ask about her cares and concerns. The isolated family needs to do things together a bit more than the extended family does. A weekly outing or fun activity does wonders for the harmony of a home, making it all the more pleasant for her to tend to her duties the rest of the week.

For the Hindu woman living in a totally isolated situation with not temple around which to focus family life, the situation may be a little more difficult. However, there are support groups available for young mothers, such as the La lecher League, and most communities have classes available in the evenings, such as dance, cooking and sewing.

Again, it is the husband's encouragement that will inspire the woman to participate in such activities. He can also encourage her to volunteer at their children's school once a week or so. Her presence in the classroom can give the children a deeper security and can give her an opportunity to monitor the attitudes in the schools so that she and her husband can make necessary corrections at home (it they differ with the family's Hindu philosophy.

The Hindu family in the new Saivite world faces many challenges. The building of temples and formation of Hindu communities and schools will help the family to

meet these challenges. But, for the "pioneers" of Saivism in isolated situations, it is the "mutual support, both spiritual and material, of husband and wife" (Saiva Dharma: A Catechism for Saivite Hinduism, page 24) that will keep the family strong so that Lord Siva's love may prevail. Aum Namasivaya.

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