WOMAN'S DESTINY

By Nicholas de Roerich

[The following article, for the first time published in English, has appeared in Prof. de Roerich's eleventh volume of works "Gates into the Future" in Russian and has caused widespread hearty comment. As always, prof. de Roerich expresses his sympathy and love for India.]

The women's movement in India is undoubtedly one of the major vitalizing forces in our national life... But the movement in India has only just begun, and in this initial stage it is difficult to venture on a prophecy about its future, except that like all movements born of necessity it is full of hidden possibilities. For taking facts as they are, it is notorious that a nation-wide women's organization with a definite aim and operative standards did not come into existence long before.

Thus speaks Lakshmi N. Menon about the feminine movement and she concludes her interesting and significant article:

Now it is up to the men of India to help this movement. It is not merely the women's cause; it is also the nation's cause and, I will add, Humanity's. But even if they, the large majority of them, do not, the movement will go on and will succeed. The past is full of warning; the present is full of hope. Destiny and the future beckon to us—dogs may bark but the Caravan will pass.

Thus is said in the Twentieth Century for June 1935. It goes on to say how impossible is delay, when fearful events are again oppressing the world, and already long ago we summoned women to unite their forces for the effective carrying out of good works.

Lakshmi N. Menon speaks correctly in her article about the many difficulties which obstruct the speedy development
of the feminine movement. We are in complete accord with her about the quantity of all the prejudices and superstitions, which, outside of questions of absurd atavism and self-conceit, hinder seeing what has already been established and what apparently should have stood out clearly and indisputably from the beginning.

It would seem ignorant and nonsensical in our day still to speak about woman's equal rights. In view of contemporary civilization and, more so, of culture about which so much is said, surely it is impossible to be in any doubt about this, that complete woman's equal rights are such a truism that it should be taken for granted. Indeed, how can it be otherwise? Surely the present is not the time of the troglodytes. Of course, only an ignoramus would dare to speak just now about a difference of rights of men and women.

In fact, it is even shameful to talk about any distinctions, yet so often legislators of so-called cultured countries still fail to rid themselves of this unthinkably monstrous prejudice. It is difficult, even hopeless, to glance into the distant past, seeking the causes there. Indeed, in such quests there can be found a multitude of misunderstandings, misinterpretations, misuses by means of partial cases, and all the other inadmissible peculiarities. But surely for the present, each moment of which is already manifested as a part of the future, it is only needful to intensify all forces in order that here on the Earth equal rights be first of all enrowned as the most primary condition of human merit and dignity.

There will be precisely an epoch of culture when laws will no longer be either feminine or masculine but will actually be human and primarily humane. Then too organizations will no longer be divided according to sex but to other different characteristics of cultural tasks. Such a
time will indeed come, because human paths, through all agitations and convulsions, nevertheless proceed in these directions. Not without reason is the current age called the Age of the Mother of the World. In this magnificent concept is included also the recognition of woman as not only of equal rights but as a being invested with a special trust for the fulfilment of undeferrable world tasks.

Among these really urgent impending problems will be first of all the introduction of goodness into the world; that is, the introduction of the broadest and deepest creativeness of good. Already the world has become very evil. Explain this situation however you will, nevertheless the absence of goodness is manifested as an international fact. It is precisely as if people have lost all knowledge of how to conduct themselves with each other. The concept of the heart has so often been crushed, as it were, reduced to ashes. If among the lofty world tasks of the Mother of the World, She first of all establishes the earthly activity of the heart, then this will verily be the opened gates into a garden of beauty.

Also, the Mother of the World takes to Her heart the matter of the peace of the whole world. Through all the manifest obstacles to peace, nevertheless precisely a strong woman's union will imperatively enunciate this concept which is sacred to human dignity and merit. For what then must people contend and overcome, boil and blaze—surely it is all for the same earned enlightened peace.

This means that we must not only think about equal rights, understanding them as something already inalienable. Beyond this attainment rise up great world problems offered to woman by the epoch itself. The author of the cited article, regrets the facts that up till now there is still no national woman's union in India. Of course this also needs to be said not only about India but, after all, about the whole
world. For such an effective and beneficent union, there must be produced possibilities of feminine cooperation flowing broadly throughout the world.

If for some reason it is impossible to create one great union, then surely it is possible to gather together in thousands, or perhaps in hundreds of thousands of cooperative groups. It is immaterial how these cooperatives be standardized. Perhaps according to specialty, perhaps according to spiritual problems—there may be a great many solutions about such working cooperatives. The essential thing is that they rise up immediately. It is needful that they come into being not only in large cities but also in every village, carrying everywhere the vitalizing force of toil and heart and striving for culture. Since we began with the example of India, let us continue with the example of that blessed country. Hamid Ali, chairman of one of the departments for the improvement of rural life, relates:

In our district there are thirteen hundred villages. Four times a year we organize courses, both for women and for men... Women come, the Hindu school-mistresses and many others without religious distinction. In the district are seventeen castes, from the Brahmin to the untouchables. Moslems, Mahratta, Christian, Jain—all work together. We teach them kitchen work, sewing, laundering, soap-making, weaving, dairy work, carpentry, nursing, gardening, care of children, combating of diseases; we give them instruction in veterinary science, about laws concerning women and laws about loans—in a word, everything which should make life in the village better and happier. In the evening after classes we have music, pictures, games, the smile of joy. Of course our poor people have forgotten how to laugh. Of course it is difficult to be merry, having food only once a day. But you should hear them on these evenings when they sing, listen to the radio and laugh together. Many also come without invitation. I have seen up to two or three thousand gather in a circle in order to join in and listen awhile...... The farmer is changing and abandoning
old slow narrow methods. Under the influence of our movement concerning the betterment of rural life, many villages have already brought improvement to their lands and some have even unified their farms along co-operative lines.

And so precisely this useful beginning closes with words about cooperatives. In the wisely constituted cooperatives it is least of all possible to expect quarrels, disagreements, perplexities. Constructive work, the urgency of labor problems, tie the consciousnesses together. People busily occupied have no time to quarrel and argue. It is necessary to work, it is necessary to succeed. And it is so attractive to convince oneself of this obvious success which cooperation produces.

The great task of the Mother of the World is first of all one of unifying and persuading. No one in the world can impede the rise of working collaborations. Against cooperatives likewise no one can make any objection. Just now in all governments this form of partial collaboration is everywhere being broadly accepted. For it is not needful to devise new laws which are disturbing to some people. This means that it is only necessary to be united in the most heartily compacted groups, and, though in small measures at first, to approach the multiform task. I emphasize the point that every seed is small, and therefore one should not strive all at once for enormous overburdening dimensions. On the contrary, precisely the small dimensions at first can promote and make easy mutual understanding. Then later it is not difficult, in a businesslike order, to find the points of contact between the already strongly welded cooperatives. Everywhere one has occasion to hear about the most unexpected and original forms of the cooperative. Not long ago one could read about entire enterprises based on the exchange of manufactured wares. If exchange of handiwork is possible, then just as precisely it is possible there to arise an intellec-
tual and beyond that a spiritual heart exchange.

Among the imperative tasks of our days will be first of all work. Precisely work covers over with itself many perplexities. Among women just now is noticeable a sincere desire to work as the basis of independence. Indeed, let us repeat, work must be most diverse, from that of the hand to that of the lofty brain. We are tired of accounts that work must first of all take place in some sort of factories. Every constructive spirit is everywhere possible and everywhere valued. And women know how to work. Of course freedom is not in beginning to smoke or to commit excesses with any other narcotics. On the contrary, just now there is required an unusual temperateness in all branches of life. Faith and loyalty come in sobriety. As it has been said unfaithful in the little, unfaithful also in the great. But true beautiful is the labor of the Mother of the World. Inspirer, creatress, everywhere producing the creativeness of good—can anyone possibly argue against this?

When equal rights are spoken about, something offensive is felt in any premises to the effect that there may be some who are of unequal rights. Of course only criminals should be deprived of any rights. But all are members of the human society; they are first of all people. Therefore, can there possibly be disputes about equal rights in our twentieth century, which thinks not only about civilization but also about culture? Has not the human heart all rights? Does not the possession of human blood convey equality of rights?

The author of the above cited article ends it in a call for assistance. Is it possible to speak about assistance there where there already be clear, realized, competent cooperation? Surely all should strive for justice. Surely all should aspire to the creative power of good. All must strive for peace, for constructive labor. One must be a traitor to humanity
to oppose these axioms. One must be a betrayer of nature to rise up against the unity of the human heart.

Each of us sees two definite types of people. Some welcome the good, while the others draw up in some sort of convulsions at any mention of the creative power of good. Let us not forget that the evil adversaries against good are at times highly organized. Does this not mean that those who are united together about good, about justice and mutual respect—that these too must be strongly unified?

I do not know if many answered the call contained in the article quoted about the feminine movement. I do think that increasing numbers must respond to it as they would to urgent questions which most vitally concern them. Just now the world is in great confusion, and therefore every unifying in the interest of justice, and creativeness of good should be undeferrable. The Age of the Mother of the World cannot be something commonplace. Let us listen in sensitive alertness for the decree of the betterment of life.