



## The Gandhian Approach towards Women Empowerment

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### **Abstract**

*Empowerment of women is a multi dimensional, multi layered & multi faceted initiative from the perspectives of society. It has diverse implications. World Bank report of 2001 describes empowerment as strengthening as a methodology of expanding the limit of the people to settle on decisions into conclusions. Mahatma Gandhi & his ideas about women empowerment needs to be reviewed in the current scenario.*

**Key words:** Equality, Mahatma Gandhi, strengths, Self reliance, women

"If I was born as woman, I would raise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything. I have mentally become a woman in order to steal into her heart. I could not steal into my wife's heart until I decided to treat her differently than I used to do, and so I restored to her all her rights by dispossessing myself of all my so-called rights as her husband. And you see her today as simple as myself"

### **Introduction**

Mahatma Gandhi & his ideas about women empowerment needs to be reviewed in the current scenario. Indian women have been experiencing heavy outrageous tortures. With the economic revolution conceded through globalization women have found good jobs but their problems with economic self reliance remains disgustingly irrelevant. Indian women contribute less than 3% to the Indian GDP even though

they constitute 50 % of the population. The great Indian reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy had pleaded for inheritance right for women. Ishwara Chandra vidyasagar championed the upliftment of women along with Jyothirao Phule P. C. Sarkar & hoard of others. Mahatma Gandhi also advocated women participation in all political struggles he waged against the British. His concept of woman as a constant energy of righteousness can be explained

### **Gandhian concept on women**

#### **Gandhian Concept of Women in Society**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual cooperation & consultation women must realize her full status & play her role on par with men (Selections from Mahatma Gandhi Constructive program pp. 17-18).



### **Gandhian Concept of Women Education**

Gandhi always favored women education. The educationally ill-disposed should be educated by their husbands. The customary and legal status of women is bad and demands radical change. (Selections from Mahatmas' Constructive program, pp. 17-18).

### **Gandhian Concept of Women Equality**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji Women are gifted with equal mental capacities and therefore she has equal rights. However, due to the force of custom, ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying superiority over women. (Selections from Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, ps. 424-425).

### **Gandhian Concept of Women Self Reliance**

Gandhi had invented a portable spinning wheel which he professed to ne be used by women for their living. (Selections from Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi) This was a strategy to inculcate discipline and dedication to weeding out the unwilling and ambitious and to include women in the movement at a time when many thought that such activities were not respectable activities for women. (Selections from the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi)

### **Gandhian Concept of Women Emancipation**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji women should be emancipated form all types of slavery. He favored the emancipation of

women he opposed purdha& extreme oppression of Hindu widows & sati system. By allowing women to participate in no tax campaign salt Satyagraha he made women to involve themselves in politics. Ultimately women will have to determine her needs with authority. He acknowledged that the determined non violent resistance technique came from his wife. (Selections from the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi)

### **Gandhian Concept of Dowry**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji dowry taking is a sin. He preferred girls to remain unmarried than to be humiliated by marrying men who preferred dowry. He called dowry as a heartless demand .He wished for mutual consent mutual love & mutual respect between husband & wife (Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi)

### **Gandhian Concept of Women in Social Service**

Gandhi worked not only for political emancipation of nation but also for the liberation of all the suppressed & oppressed sections of society . He could awaken women to shed their deep rooted sense of inferiority & rise to dignity & self esteem. ( Selections from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi )

### **Gandhian Concept of Child Marriage**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji child marriage was a moral & physical evil. He thought that it undermines the morality & induced physical disintegration. It was vicious brutal & barbarous. (



Selections from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi )

### **Gandhian Concept of Prostitution**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji prostitution as moral leprosy. The beast in man has made the detestable crime a lucrative profession he appealed to them to give up their unworthy profession & become sanyasinis( Selections from Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi)

### **Gandhian Concept of Marriage**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji marriage was a sacrament imposing discipline on both the partners. He insisted on monogamy in His opinion woman was a companion of man gifted with equal mental capabilities . Gandhi very clearly said that women should cease to consider herself as the object of man's lust(Selections from Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi)

### **Gandhian Concept of Sexuality**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji sexuality should be kept inside the marriage limits. He said all sexualities outside the marriage should be banned..referring to his own life he observed that he began to enjoy his married life only after abandoned sex. For him, "the conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man's or a woman's existence" (Selections from Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi).

### **Gandhian Concept of Widowhood**

According to Mahatma Gandhiji the miseries for a woman as a widow. Gandhi saw widows as strong reservoirs of

energy. , "It is worth considering carefully in what way the country can avail itself of the services of hundreds of widows, young and old". (Selections from the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi)As Gandhi respected widows who dedicated themselves to the service of humanity, he had great regard for women who chose the path of staying single to serve society and the nation. In his opinion, not every Indian girl is born to marry. There are many girls willing to dedicate themselves to service instead of servicing one man.(Selections from Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, & Andrews, C. F. (2008). The teaching of Ahimsa Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas )

### **Gandhian Concept of Women In Political Participation**

Gandhi had visualized a great role for women in eradicating the evil of communalism. His appeal to women was to refuse to cook, and to starve themselves in protest so long as their men "do not wash their hand of these dirty communal squabbles". ( Selections from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi ) .Gandhi's appeal reached women everywhere in India . He expected great things from them in the areas of work concerning purity of life, removal of untouchability, propagation of *Khadi*. communal harmony and *Swadeshi*(Selections from Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi) & ( Andrews, C. F. (2008) The teaching of ahimsa Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas ) He said " In my own opinion men & women are but one their problems are one in



essence the soul in both is the same the two live same life have the same feeling each is a complement to other one cannot live without one's active help". He was painful when he observed that "of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of his better half. He was of the opinion that women were the embodiment of the sacrifice silent suffering humility faith & knowledge". These were the qualities he expected for his Satyagraha & ahimsa hence he thought women could best fit in as the Satyagraha followers. The soul force or the truth force could emanate only from women he thought. Even in south Africa he could make his women followers to fight for their civil rights, embark upon the police with fortitude & get imprisoned without resisting.

**Conclusion:**

Gandhi perceived the problems of women & considered them as great reservoirs of energy. He could pursue them take part in National freedom struggle. He pleaded the women to understand their potentialities & to act accordingly. He condemned all vices concerning women & propagated virtuousness & purity.

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