

# Gandhi on Women Emancipation

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## ABSTRACT

The present century, the age of humanism is the high time to provide an equal privilege and dignity to all the suppressed and oppressed sections of the society. Therefore, Women emancipation and upliftment has been becoming a burning issue day by day in the present century. Unlike many noble souls who focused on this issue, Gandhi is one of them. Gandhi had distinct views regarding different issues related to women. In this article we shall try to analyse Gandhi's views regarding different women issues in the present society. Gandhi focused on different women issues like marriage, divorce, widow remarriage, pardah system, dowry system, women education, political involvement of women etc. So we shall try to find the way out that Gandhi prescribed regarding different women issues existing in the society.

## Keywords

Women, Emancipation, Political Involvement, Widow.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the social changes and developments the necessity of women empowerment and gender issue has been becoming a burning issue day by day. Removing social disparities between men and women and bringing about equal status of women along with men at every spheres of life like economic, political, social, educational and professional and even to religious spheres also has become a burning necessity in the present century which is an age of humanism. Different religious and social norms tried to bind with shackles the feet of women from the ancient ages. But history tells us that different women like Gargi, Arundhuty, Opola, Maitreyee, Draupadi, Damoyonti, could succeeded to put themselves as bright examples to break up the chain of the ignorance of society and played a vital role to prove the necessity of social reformation and the upliftment of women. Although it is true to some living religions to provide an exalted position and high status to women in every spheres of life in the society, still some aspects of some existing religions are causes of concern and degradation of the position of women in the society [1, 2, 3].

## 2. GANDHI ON WOMEN

Like many other noble souls who wrote and worked with the principle of gender equality in the society, Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nation, played a vital role to the society in the

various aspects of social life, should be brought. Thus Gandhi put his noble focus on the all-round development and emancipation of women in the society and this became one of his noble life-goals. Gandhi said that the women's minds should be awakened so that they can realize their own dignity and self-esteem and can shed off their deep rooted sense of inferiority. "When women whom we call abala (weak) become sabala (strong), all those who are helpless will become powerful," Gandhi himself said. Consequently, Gandhian views attracted a large number of women, irrespective of rural, urban, educated, uneducated, Indian or foreign. Gandhi focused on different issues related to the emancipation of women like equality of sexes, marriage, Pardah, dowry system, widow remarriage, divorce, women education and co-education, birth control etc [5, 7]. Gandhi in clear voice opined that women have been taught to regard themselves as slaves of men. But women must realize their full status and play their part as equals of men [4, 5, 6]. Gandhi on marriage and divorce: Gandhi had clear cut voice with regard to different feministic issues. According to Gandhi "marriage is a sacrament. Gandhi regarded that marriage is a state of discipline. This state of discipline can be maintained through moral restraint and repentance. So to keep a marriage relation intact moral restraint should be observed so that the unexpected situation of divorce can be avoided [7, 8]. In Gandhi's words "marriage confers no right upon one partner to demand obedience of the other. However, divorce is not the only alternative. Marriage is a state of discipline. The bond can be broken when one partner violates discipline. This is a moral, not a physical, breach. It blocks separate. In Hinduism, each is held to be absolutely equal to the other. According to Young India, October 1926, "Hinduism gives the individual complete freedom for the purpose of self-realization, for which he or she is born."

## 3. POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN

Gandhi wanted to inject moral and ethical elements in every aspects of life that may be political, social, economical, biological anything. To the issues of women empowerment Gandhi followed the same strategy. Gandhi could find out that Satyagraha, salt agitation spinning are the ways for women to join the political movement to attain Swaraj [5]. Gandhi saw that these are the easily accessible and non-violent ways to be practiced by women to involve themselves for the freedom

struggle of India. Satyagraha is the most powerful and non-violent and moral weapon and strategy to ensure women empowerment Gandhi was one of few successful person to involve women to the Satyagraha struggle directed for Indian independence [4]. Gandhi could see that women are the ardent followers of Satyagraha and had deep level faith on women's inherent capacity for non-violence. Women's active participation in political movement in South Africa and the success attained there enriched Gandhi's faith about women's inner strength or soul force. The notable activities performed by the South African women directly or indirectly are preparing and selling Khadi, holding public meetings, picketing soaps of foreign liquor and foreign goods, suffering imprisonments and even donating their own wealth and belongings. This direct and indirect participation of women in political movements not only enhanced the internal moral strength of women but also helped them to throw out the age-old prejudices prevailing in the society at that time. Moreover the active participation of women in political movements and Indian freedom struggle feminized the nationalistic movement. So we can say that Gandhi's leadership for women led them to maintain their self-esteem and dignity. Conclusion: In the 21st century, although social milieu has been changed and developed, still the status of women in our society is inferior to that of men comparatively. Women are expected to be dependent upon men and do as directed [9, 10,11]. Women are regarded as either property or instruments for playing or entertainment or as the kitchen freak. But it's the time to cover women for the sake of the whole mortal society. It's the time to change our intelligence and to feel that it's our moral, social, indigenous, responsibility to insure women's progress by furnishing them with equal rights and openings [12, 13].

### 4. WIDOW REMARRIAGE

Gandhi was against the laws, walls, customs assessed by society to a widow. He emphasized on free will of women in this regard. He said that adult widow with children, shouldn't alter the marriage vows taken at the time of their first marriage. But he also added that if anybody wishes can enter to a alternate relationship. In case of child widow Gandhi had strict views. He wanted child widow to be properly wedded [4]. He was of the opinion that the first marriage in case of child widow wasn't a marriage at each in the real sense of the term. Gandhi put a good illustration by allowing his own son Hiralal to marry a widow after his woman's death on 1918. Gandhi had seen that his son Hiralal came addicted to alcohol and women after his woman's death[6]. So to help such a divagation widow remarriage becomes necessary. Gandhi expressed his views regarding widow remarriage in Young India as follows "Widowhood assessed by religion or custom is an unsupportable servitude and defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion. In order to save Hinduism, enforced widowhood must be ridden. Child widows must be properly and well wedded and not married. They were noway really wedded."

### 5. DOWRY SYSTEM

Still in our society birth of a girl child isn't regarded joyfully as the birth of boy. Gandhi editorialized that the dowry system is a product of the estate system[5]. Gandhi supported inter estate marriage and wanted women to stay to have set up a perfect match who would be a gallant youthful man. Gandhi expressed his views regarding this social curse in Young India as follows "The dowry system is a product of the estate system. numerous marriages were celebrated in Gandhi's Vihara through Ashram prayer in a veritably simple manner. Gandhi used to give the recently married couple some precious moral advises and a dupe of Bhagavad Gita [7].

Pardah System Gandhi was against the pardah system. He regarded it as a social and religious hedge and interferes to perform different workshop by women. Gandhi said that women chastity is a matter of chastity in body and mind and can be defended through tone control and not by robe (pardah). His view regarding pardah is as follows "Chastity can not be defended by the girding wall of the Pardah. It must grow from within and it must be able of opposing every uninvited temptation (Young India, February, 1927) [12].

### 6. WOMEN EDUCATION

Gandhi was in favour of promoting women education or knowledge. He allowed

ignorance of women as a curse of the mortal society. The vast number of illiterate women in society is due to the ancient morals, customs, laws, that are assessed upon women by the patriarchal society. As Gandhi quoted in Harijan.; "Unlike ignorance among men, ignorance among women isn't caused by shiftlessness or inactivity. The inferiority she has been unfairly ingrained with by ancient tradition is a more potent cause. rather of seeing her as his companion and "better half," man has turned her into a domestic slave and a tool for his pleasure! Our society becomes incompletely paralyzed as a result. Woman has correctly been the mama of the race [10]. We owe it to her and to ourselves to undo the great wrong that we've done her." But Gandhian view of women education is grounded on natural demarcation of men and women and on family ideals. Because he assumed that men are fit to perform outward conditioning and women for ménage bones.

But men and women are supplementary to each other. therefore while formulating the principles of education and course of instruction these primary principles should be kept in mind. As Gandhi quoted. "Man and woman are of equal rank but they aren't identical[9]. They're an incomparable brace being supplementary to one another; each help the other, so that without one the actuality of the other can not be conceived, and thus it follows as a necessary corollary from these data that anything that will vitiate the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both. This abecedarian fact needs to be kept in mind at all times when contriving any plan for the education of women. Because man dominates the outside conditioning of a wedded couple, he ought to be more knowledgeable about the health of effects. On the other hand home life is entirely the sphere of woman and thus in domestic affairs, in the parenting and education of children, women ought to have further knowledge[13]. Not that some areas of knowledge should be closed off to the public or divided into chambers that are impervious to water; still, "the fullest life of man or woman can not be developed unless courses of instruction are grounded on a discriminating appreciation of these abecedarian principles.

### 7. CONCLUSION

Unlike numerous noble souls who concentrated on this issue, Gandhi is one of them. Gandhi had distinct views regarding different issues related to women. In this composition we shall try to assay Gandhi's views regarding different women issues in the present society. Gandhi concentrated on different women issues like marriage, divorce, widow remarriage, pardah system, dowry system, women education, political involvement of women etc. So we shall try to find the way out that Gandhi specified regarding different women issues being in the society.

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