

Gandhi's views on women in the context of Social, Economic and Political Issues

Dr. Sabina Singh
Associate Professor
Pt. J.L.N. Government P.G. College, Faridabad

Ms. Khushi Singh
B.Com (Hons)
Dyal Singh College
University of Delhi

The status of this paper is to understand Gandhi's views on women in the context of social, economic and political issues. Gandhi's thought on women upliftment, against child marriage, social and religious barriers to widow remarriage, purdah system, dowry system. Heavy expenditure in connection to marriage, etc. As well as discuss on Gandhiji's view of women participation in politics. After Gandhi what is the position of women in India will also be the focus in this paper. Gandhi's inspiring ideologies boosted their morals and helped them to rediscover their self-esteem, not only there was a general awakening among the women, but also under Gandhi's leadership they entered in to the national mainstream, taking parts in the national movements. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2 October 1869 to 30 January 1948) was an Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist, and political ethicist, who employed non-violent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence from British Rule, and in turn inspire movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. The honorific Mahatma first applied to him in 1914 in South Africa is now used through out the world.

Keywords: Gandhi, Women, Social, Upliftment

1.1 Introduction

Gandhi's vision was clear towards women empowerment, Gandhi was able to devote himself to such a mission and formulated views on all aspects of a woman's life, political, social, domestic and even the very personal or intimate. He was able to do this by liberating himself from the sexual desires that identify the difference between man and woman and thereby positioned himself well above the feminist, becoming instead a reformer of humanity. "True affection does not demand identity of outlook... my passion for brahmcharya has that meaning. I must be wholly pure, if I have true love for womankind". While this gave him the right to demand far-reaching changes in the attitudes of society towards women and the attitudes of women about themselves. He rooted his views on distinctly Indian soil. It was also for the "nonintellectual among Indian woman". "I began work among women when I was not even thirty years old. There is not a woman in South Africa who does not know me. But my work was among the poorest. The intellectual I could not draw...you can't blame me for having organized the intellectuals among women. I have not the gift...but just as I never fear the coldness on the part of the poor when I approach them. I never fear it when I approach poor women. There is an invisible bond between them and me" (8 July 1938). This was a group of those women who were empowered by this man in dhoti. Women could easily understand him because of his simplicity and connect with Hindu culture and religion. He wanted them to renounce the approach of servitude towards male counterpart. He succeeded in establishing a good connect with female members in the society.

1.2 Research Methodology

This study completely based on secondary data's which are collected from Books, article, journals, research paper, internet sources and from different university libraries.

1.3 Gandhi views on Women

Mahatma Gandhi, one of India's greatest leaders, was a staunch advocate of women's rights and believed in empowering them socially, economically, and politically. He firmly believed that women had an essential role to play in India's independence movement and could become agents of change and transformation.

Gandhi's views on women were shaped by his experiences in South Africa, where he witnessed the discrimination faced by Indian women. He saw how women were subjected to oppressive and discriminatory practices such as forced marriages, plight of widows, restricted mobility, and denied education. These experiences motivated him to fight for women's rights and to work towards their empowerment.

The Mahatma said that women have been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. Rules of social conduct must

be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. Women have been taught to regard themselves as slaves of men. Women must realize their full status and play their part as equals of men. Wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence but should be treated as honored comrades in common service. The educationally ill-disposed should be educated by their husbands. The customary and legal status of women was bad and demanded a radical change.

Gandhi believed that women's empowerment was essential for the overall development of the country. He believed that women could contribute to the country's progress and development in several ways and that they could become active agents of social and economic change. He emphasized the need to create opportunities for women to participate in various fields such as education, politics, and the workforce.

In Gandhi's vision of women's empowerment, education played a critical role. He believed that education was a tool for women's empowerment and that it was the key to unlocking their full potential. He advocated for the education of girls and women, emphasizing that education could help women become more confident and self-reliant. He believed that educated women could better participate in the political and social spheres and could contribute to the country's development.

Gandhi's views on women's political empowerment were revolutionary for his time. He believed that women had an essential role to play in the political sphere and that their participation was crucial for the country's development. He advocated for women's right to vote and for their participation in politics. He believed that women could bring a unique perspective to the political arena and that their participation could help address issues affecting women and society as a whole.

Gandhi's vision was based on the principles of non-violence, equality, and justice. He believed that women should be treated with respect and dignity and that they should have the same rights and opportunities as men. He opposed any form of discrimination or violence against women and advocated for their protection and safety.

In Gandhi's vision of women's empowerment, women were not just passive recipients of change but active agents of transformation. He believed that women could drive change in society and could become leaders and role models for others. He emphasized the need to create opportunities for women to develop their leadership skills and to become agents of change in their communities.

Gandhi also emphasized the importance of economic empowerment for women. He believed that economic empowerment could help women break the cycle of poverty and improve their social status. He advocated for women's participation in various economic activities,

including agriculture and handicrafts. He also emphasized the need to create opportunities for women to participate in the formal workforce.

Gandhi's vision of women's empowerment was not limited to socio-economic and political spheres. He also believed in the importance of women's spiritual development and their role in shaping the moral and ethical values of society. He believed that women could become role models and inspire others through their actions and values.

1.4 Socio-Economic and Political Approach

Gandhi ji stated, "If you women would only appreciate your dignity and privilege, and make full use of it for mankind, you will make it far better than it is," in a letter sent to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from Wardha on October 21, 1936. Yet man took great pleasure in making you his slaves, and you demonstrated that you were obedient till the slaves and the slave-holders united in the crime of demeaning humanity. You could argue that since I was a young child, my specific purpose has been to help women recognise their worth. I had owned slaves myself, but Kasturba proved to be a disobedient one and helped me realise my purpose. Her work is complete. I'm now looking for a woman who will complete her mission. Are you that woman, will you be one?" (**Harijan, July 13, 1938**).

Gandhiji suggested nonviolent means for women to participate in the political campaign for Swaraj, such as spinning and the salt agitation. He believed that for women at that point in history, it was both right and practicable. He had made adjustments to his previous, more generic view of women's participation in public life by 1940. There are concerns raised regarding the growing involvement of women in activities outside the home in a particular issue of the Harijan from that year. While first embracing a strong moral conviction and frequently conservative stance, he may then appear to renounce it in favour of a more fruitful and dynamic postulation that would thrust him to the forefront of extreme liberalism. Usually, Gandhiji was able to change his conventional viewpoints by means of knowledge. When KakasahebKalekar asked Gandhiji to write a primer for schoolchildren, he did so in the persona of a mother instructing her kid, in which she tells her son that doing chores is important for both the body and the mind and helps develop character. Because both men and women share ownership of the household, he argued, "Men and women need to be taught equally in housework." This was a part of his efforts to create a completely new society because he believed that without it, cultural discourse about the existing society would not be able to significantly improve the lot of mankind. He was also never afraid to offer straightforward and doable solutions to problems in order to accomplish his objectives. He always had a constructive suggestion to help women overcome their historical mental barriers and enter a better, more dignified life, whether it was feminist ideals from a text book or spinning the charkha for Swaraj.

According to Gandhi, the liberation of women was connected to a pervasive ill. In a lengthy letter she sent to Mahatma Gandhi in 1929, Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy addressed some crucial concerns about social reform. She also questioned why the congress, which was fighting for the independence of every nation and individual, should not first free their ladies from the detestable customs and conventions that impeded their healthy all-around growth. She viewed it as a special example of societal despotism. Whether it was feminist principles from a text book or spinning the charkha for Swaraj, he always had a helpful advice to help women get over their historical mental hurdles and into a better, more respectable existence.

Gandhi claimed that the liberation of women was related to a widespread disease. Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy addressed some very important issues of social reform in a lengthy letter she wrote to Mahatma Gandhi in 1929. She also questioned why the congress, which was fighting for the freedom of every country and everyone, did not first free their women from the abhorrent practises and conventions that hampered their robust overall development. She saw it as a unique illustration of societal dictatorship. His response to this was, "Men are undoubtedly to blame for their neglect, their ill use of women, and they have to do adequate penance, but those women who have work of reform. The question of liberation of women, liberation of India, removal of untouchability, amelioration of the economic condition of the masses and the like, resolve themselves by penetration into the villages, reconstruction or rather reformation of the village life." He held that in order to realise one's goal of freedom from the many social restraints, one had to struggle for overall change, beginning in the villageie. at grassroot levels. The answers given above show that Gandhiji was not yet prepared to confront male domination, maybe because doing so would have distracted from the goal of the freedom struggle.

He viewed such a marriage as being wholly void from the beginning and as such, not even a marriage. He would have preferred mature widows, especially those with children, to honour their marriage vows and their first love by not getting remarried. A widow has every right to remarry if she is unable to do so or does not want to do so, and society should not judge her for doing so.

He was also vocal about caste system and bad practice of dowry .A byproduct of the caste system is the dowry system. Dowry will be abolished as caste is eliminated (Harijan, 23rd May, 1936). Demanding dowry is equivalent to devaluing femininity. Young men who demanded dowries ought to be banished. Parents of girls should stop being seduced by English degrees and should not be afraid to leave their small castes and provinces in order to find their daughters real, brave young men (Young India, 21st June, 1928).

1.5 Conclusion

We can set aside some of his views such as the women being a complement of men in matters of occupation and education and female chastity in the context of women's honor. The Mahatma, by far, can be considered best friend of women in India and the world. The Mahatma's purity of thought and honest intentions are beyond question. No other man in the entire history of India or in the world had such godly ideas about women. For both men and women, to have a better perspective of each other and life, Gandhian literature will continue to be a prescription for many years to come.

Mahatma Gandhi's views on women's empowerment were based on his belief in non-violence, equality, and justice. He saw women as critical agents of change who could contribute significantly to the socio-economic and political development of society. His vision for women's empowerment emphasized the need for education, economic empowerment, and political participation. Despite the criticisms, his vision remains relevant today and continues to inspire and guide women's empowerment efforts worldwide.

1.6 References

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