

# Credence of Mahatma Gandhi towards Women Liberation and its Relevance in the Present Scenario

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**Abstract:** *The Father of Nation Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the influential spearhead of the freedom movement of India. The path of "Ahimsa" was the main weapon of the Gandhian's philosophy for the battle of freedom. Gandhiji was a true devotee of women empowerment. He believed that nobody can free and liberate women from their social and mental burden unless the women herself wish to do so. The present study is an overview of Gandhian thoughts towards women liberation. The paper has discussed the social, political, educational position of women according to Gandhiji and the relevance of his thought in the present context. A detailed study on related published peer-reviewed scholarly articles, unpublished non-peer-reviewed articles of related aspects, newspapers, and internet sources explore that though Gandhiji truly believed in gender equality and freedom of women in every aspect of life, till now women empowerment is not getting its actual dignity what it should be. The government of India has implemented many rules and regulations against crime towards women, steps for gender equality and women empowerment. Despite that crime against women and gender bias always lead to violation of the human rights of women in India.*

**Keywords:** Credence of Gandhiji, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Women Liberation

## 1. Introduction

The Father of Nation Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the powerful leader of the freedom movement of India. The path of "Ahimsa" was the main weapon of the Gandhian's philosophy for the battle of freedom. The perception of Gandhiji towards women was revolutionary thinking at the time of pre-independence in India. His thoughts on women's freedom and emancipation are also relevant in the present days. Belief in self-esteem and self-respect are the only way to change women's life from salvation. Gandhiji believed that women have equal mental capacities as men. Women can raise their personality and their dignity when they understood the importance and value of themselves in a male-dominated society.

The present study empathised on Gandhian thoughts towards women liberation. The paper has discussed the social, political, educational position of women according to Gandhiji and the relevance of his thought in the present context. Besides that, the rules and regulations that have been implemented by the Government of India against crime towards women, steps for gender equality and women empowerment are also discussed.

## 2. Literature Survey

According to Gandhi, the three main issues for recommending women empowerment are education, employment and change in the social structure. In our society women are treated as slaves of men. Women should realize their position, full status and need to play equal mental capacities compare to men (Gandhi, M.K. 1957). According to Sain, R. (2016) Gandhi's inspiring ideologies increased women's morals and assisted them to rediscover their self-esteem and self-dignity. The women who are known as "Abala" becomes "Sabala" if they realize their level of liberty. Gandhiji expressed his view in clear words: "I make no distinction between son and daughter. Such

distinction in my opinion is invidious and wrong. The birth of a son or a daughter should be welcomed alike. They complement each other. Each one of them, according to him, needs the active help of other" (Pratibha Jain, Gandhian Ideas, Social Movements and Creativity, p.142., 2017). According to Basheer, R. P. (2018) cultural factors sometimes causes obstacles for women education. Some cultures do not support education for women, even they do not like to send their girls outside the home and not to interact with other people. Gandhiji especially emphasised mandatory education for girls to ensure the natural right of the women and to make them feel free to choose their destiny of life. In the study of Cambell, D. & Dass, L. P. (2019) the thought of Gandhiji towards women empowerment was that empowering the women of India means equality in decision making and power to control own life irrespective of one's gender. According to Gandhi women are superior to men in the field of spirituality and morality. Even women have a vital role to play in the Political, Economical, Social and Educational liberation of the country.

From the previous researches, the present paper focuses on the social, political and educational position of women according to Gandhiji.

## 3. Statement of the Problem

The problem of the present study was specified and stated as, "Credence of Mahatma Gandhi towards Women Liberation and its Relevance in the Present Scenario".

## 4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- 1) To study the Gandhiji's belief on women empowerment and the social, political and educational position of women in India

- 2) To find out the relevance of Gandhiji's thought on women in the present context

## 5. Methodology

The present study is review-based research. A detailed study on peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed articles of related aspects, books, newspapers, and internet sources are taken as secondary data.

## 6. Discussion

### I. The Social Position of women according to Gandhiji

Gandhiji was a social reformer. His thinking on women empowerment has a social aspect. He wanted to change the mind of society what they think about women. Generally, it is a known concept about women is that they are the slave of a male-dominated society. Gandhiji strongly denied the thought of slavery of women. He believed that women are the companion of the man with equal mental capacities. Gandhiji opposed many social systems that were continuing over the years and all those rules are forced to do a woman. Gandhiji raised his voice against the dowry system, pardah system, differentiation in castes. He supported widow remarriage, equality of sexes or gender equality etc.

According to Gandhiji, child widow need to be duly married. He put a good example by giving marriage to his son Hiralal with a widow after the death of his son's wife. Gandhiji believed that widow remarriage is important to continue the flow of the society and as well as to allow the unfortunate peoples to cope up in the mainstream of the society. Gandhiji's views on widow remarriage were stated in his book Young India.

Gandhiji believed that the dowry system is a social curse. From the bride side, dowry is a nightmare for her family. So, this kind of social disease must be abolished as per the view of Gandhiji.

The caste system is another social disorder according to Gandhiji. He said that the women of scheduled castes and other backward classes are mostly treated as a slave to society and are obliged to choose the prostitution work. Gandhiji also said that the dowry system is the product of the caste system. So, the caste system must be abolished from society.

Gandhiji was against the "parda" system. He thought that parda is not only a social burden but also a mental barrier for women. Women can protect themselves by self-control, they do not need to wear "parda" to prove their purity.

In Young India, Gandhiji said that women have no right to suffer from any kind of disabilities that are not suffered by a man. Women and man are perfectly equal. Gandhiji believed in gender equality.

Gandhiji always showed examples like 'Draupadi', 'Savitri', 'Sita' and 'Damayanti' as eminent idol of Indian women to show all the women of India not to feeble.

### II. The Political Position of women according to Gandhiji

Gandhiji believed that women will be the unquestioned leader if they will be given a chance. He encouraged all the women at the time of the freedom struggle of India to join the battle of "Ahimsa". This was not only a freedom battle of the nation, but it was also a war of liberation and emancipation of women. Interestingly, Gandhi had confessed that he learnt the technique of non-violent passive struggle from women, especially from his wife and mother.

In ancient India, there were lots of examples where women directly involved in politics. Megasthenes stated the Pandya women successively ruled the administration. The satavahana queen Nayanika ruled the kingdom on behalf of her son. After the Gupta period, there were many examples where queens used to rule in Kashmir, Odisha and Andhra. Gandhiji always believed that women of India have lots of mental power to show their capacity in the freedom struggle and it develops self-confidence and self-esteem also. To attain Swaraj, Gandhiji proposed women join some political movement like Satyagraha, salt agitation spinning. Satyagraha was most of the powerful steps for "Ahimsa". Gandhiji had seen the inner strength, moral power and deep faith in women's inherent capacities on non-violence. With Gandhi's motivation, they took the struggle right into their homes and raised it to a moral level. Public meetings, selling khadi, picketing shops of liquor etc. was started by the women. The nationalist struggle helped women to liberate themselves from age-old traditions.

### III. The Educational Position of women according to Gandhiji

Gandhiji was a true believer in women education. Women have equal mental capacities as a man to flourish themselves as supplementary to man. Women and man can help each other in their work. Gandhiji said that man is supreme in the extra-mural activities and women are supreme in the inter-mural activities. He also said that education imparted to both man and women should be according to their pre-ordained position in life. Gandhiji raised his voice against the illiteracy of women. He noticed that man had converted women as a domestic slave, drudge and a machine of his pleasure. Where women should be treated as a better half and helpmate of a man. According to Gandhi, only education can empower a woman. Education can help women to raise their voice towards their natural rights. He believed in compulsory education for all girls irrespective of their castes, race and creeds. Hence education is essential for women. He understood that education is important to affirm their rights, dignity to exercise them wisely and to work for their development. Gandhiji believed that the harmonious development of women's personality such as mental, spiritual, moral and physical, can be developed by proper education. Up to class five, he suggested that the curriculum should be the same for both the boys and girls. The subjects like natural sciences, social sciences and mathematics should be included in the curriculum. After class five, domestic science should be added to the school curriculum for the girls' students so that they can easily understand and handle domestic problems. To make girls economically independent, he wanted to provide education through craft.

He also emphasised teaching music and drawing to girls. Gandhiji was a true supporter of the use of the native language as a medium of education. "The Wardha Scheme has been so planned as to be consistent with Gandhi's basic ideas regarding women education" (Gurjar, M. S., 2017)

#### IV. Today's obstacles in women liberation:

- 1) Women are treated as the weaker sex in our society. This also hammered her "self" and inner mind which makes her suffer at every step in life.
- 2) Child marriage is still a common problem. With 1 in 2 girls admitting to being married off before the legal age of 18.
- 3) Crime against women and gender bias always top to damage to the human rights of women in India.
- 4) Sexual harassment and rape cases always look like a hanging sword over every woman.
- 5) Women's are the victims of domestic violence. It also creates barriers to women liberation and women empowerment.
- 6) Dowry system is also a running trend at present days that a big obstacle for women liberation.
- 7) Professional inequality is being faced by a huge number of women in their workplaces.
- 8) The biggest obstacles to women empowerment are people themselves and their narrow-minded attitudes.

#### V. Constitutional initiatives for women liberation in India:

- 1) Article 14 emphasises equality before the law for all persons.
- 2) Article 15(3) shows special provisions by the state in favour of women and children.
- 3) Article 16 secure the equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.
- 4) Article 39(d) states that state policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood to equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- 5) Article 42 secure provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
- 6) Article 51A(e) ensure the promotion of harmony by every citizen of India and renouncement of such practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women.
- 7) Articles 343(d) and 343(T) states the reservation of not less than one-third of total seats for women in direct-election to local bodies, viz; Panchayats and Municipalities.
- 8) The enactment of Hindu Lawguarantees the right to divorce and remarriage to Hindu women.
- 9) The Inheritance Act provides equal share to women in the property.
- 10) The Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 1983 provides crucial amendments concerning women in the Indian PenalCode.
- 11) Irrespective of caste, creed or religion, there are some Acts that relief for all women-Termination of Pregnancy, Maternity Benefit Act, The Dowry Prohibition Act.

- 12) Besides that, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, One Stop Centre Scheme, Women Helpline Scheme, UJJAWALA, Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the children of working mothers, SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances) are the effective initiatives taken by the Government of India.

Despite such provisions, an opposite picture of empowerment of women is seen in the country India. Still now, in many societies, themovement of women is restricted and they do not allow women to go outside for work.

#### 7. Conclusion

Gandhi visualized that women have an active role in the future construction of society and country. They have the power of patience and tolerance that increase self-esteem. Inner strength can only give the power to fight against any curse and problems. Women are the strength of every country.

India has completed 74 years of independence. Gandhiji's views towards women are still relevant in the present days in India. Women are gradually increasing their dignity and position in society and they believe that they have the power of resistance to doing equal work like a man. Women energize themselves to do work at home as well as outside the home in workplaces. Irrespective of class, creed and religion, women are developing fearlessly and their self-esteem and self-belief have been increased. The inner spirit of women is not less impressive than women of the national freedom struggle movement of India.

Women indeed develop themselves in every aspect but gender inequality and sexual crime are still happening in our society which is one of the biggest problems for women empowerment and women liberation. Women continue to be the victims of domestic violence, dowry, prostitution and witch-hunting etc. Besides that, the mental state of some society is still full in orthodoxy where it is thought that women are the slave of man and they do not need to go outside. The only work of women is to do household works, child care and give sexual pleasure to her husband. This kind of thought is very unfortunate at the time of 21<sup>st</sup> century's India. Hence, it is an appropriate time to shadow and recalls the golden words of Mahatma Gandhi to give respect and equal rights as a citizen of the nation to all the women in India.

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