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**Chief Editor**

**Prof. Dr. Ravindra P. Bhanage**

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Shivaji University,

Kolhapur.

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## **“Mahatma Gandhi : Views on Women Empowerment”**

**Dr. Dayavati Padalkar**, Head of Department of Sociology, Bharati Vidyapeeth's, Matoshri Bayabai Shripatrao Kadam Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Kadegaon, Dist, Sangli, Maharashtra.

### **Abstract :**

Women empowerment is one of the most important issues of discussion in all over the world. Many countries have been able to overcome this issue to some extent. But in India, the subject is still persistent and relevant because women continue to struggle in our predominantly patriarchal society. Family, Relatives, Neighbors means the society thinks that women are considered the weaker gender and incapable of taking decision on their own. Society expected that women always follow and live as a dependent on their male counterpart. But the 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi was a strong votary of women empowerment in India. Education for each woman is not only the solution of women's status or empowerment. Because there are so many issues against women like child marriages, rape, dowry system, domestic violence, sex-selective abortion, honor killing, trafficking, sexual harassment, dowry, etc. are still prevailing in spite of already established laws against them. The solution lies in making the society more empathetic and liberal towards issues related to gender. In this paper discuss on Gandhiji's thought on women, as well as Gandhiji's view on status, education, equality, reality of violence against women and overall, focused on empowerment of women.

### **Introduction:**

Indian women suffer many disabilities and injustice in the society. To understand in depth the role that Gandhi played in improving the position of women in society, it is essential to look at women's status, prevalent at that time. Women are gifted with equal mental capacities and therefore she has equal rights. Gandhiji declared that men and women are equal, but not identical "Intellectually, mentally, and spiritually, woman is equivalent to a male and she can participate in every activity." So, Mahatma Gandhi thoughts and prefers to empowerment of women. Because, women empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women. To ensure equal right to women, to make them confident, freely live their life with self-respect and self-dignity. In this paper discuss on Gandhiji's thought on women, as well as discuss on

Gandhiji's view of status, education, equality, reality of violence against women and overall, mostly focused on empowerment of women.

*Objectives:*

1. To understand Gandhiji's view on status and education of women.
2. To understand the reality of some issues of violence against women.
3. To understand the power of empowerment of women by Mahatma Gandhi.
4. To know the changing scenario of today's women through Mahatma Gandhi.

*Methodology:*

This research paper is based on secondary data methodology. Research method includes data collection through the books, magazine, journal articles, surveys, Government publications and internet information etc.

Before to know the situation and Mahatma Gandhiji's view on women's empowerment some most important issues want to focus ...

*Status of Women:*

Over the past few millennia, the status of women in India has been many great changes. In ancient times there was equal status with men, through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers. One of them is Mahatma Gandhi. The history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have adorned high offices in India including that of the President, Prime minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition etc. The current President of India is a woman. In fact, its credit goes to Mahatma Gandhi.

*Women's Education:*

Education enables women to uphold their natural rights. Educational facility is equal men and women and so they are complementary to each other. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate an entire family." The Mahatma's views on women's education are based on family ideals because he assumes that man is supreme in the extra-mural activities and that woman is supreme in intra-mural activities. Therefore, education provided to both men and women should be equal. Mahatma Gandhi wanted an education that could help Indians recover their sense of dignity and self-respect.

*Some issues regarding violence against women:*

1. Child marriage - Gandhi objected to child marriages, for they were devoid of the element of consent on the part of the concerned boy as well as the girl. He believed that both the boy and the girl should be developed physically and mentally at the time of marriage and that they should have a voice in the choice of their life partner. He said women cannot make any progress so long as there are child marriages, as it results in denial of educational opportunities and deprivation of joys of girlhood.
2. Dowry System - Mahatma Gandhi was against the dowry system and considered it as an outcome of the caste system. Mahatma Gandhi's opinion was that if a man asks for dowry he should be excommunicated from society and parents of girls should not be dazzled by English degrees and should also not hesitate to enter matrimony outside caste and provinces to find a true match for their daughter.
3. Divorce - Mahatma Gandhi condemned heavy expenditure done in the marriage ceremony. He wanted simple marriages. Gandhi regarded that divorce is not the only alternative solution when a marriage relationship is in a state of suspension. Mahatma Gandhi regarded that marriage is a state of discipline. This state of discipline can be sustained through moral upholding and remorse.
4. Widow Remarriage - Mahatma Gandhi was firm in his views regarding child widow. If a widow is a child, that child should be duly married as he thoroughly rejects first marriage in case of a child widow. But in the name of religion, we force widowhood upon our girl widows who could not understand the importance of the marriage ceremony. To force widowhood upon little girls is a brutal crime ...

#### *Empowerment of women:*

Gandhi was not only a great political leader but a passionate lover of humanity. Mahatma Gandhi was an advocate of women's liberalization and empowerment and was a staunch supporter of gender equality. His message almost six decades ago at the All India Women's Conference on December 23, 1936 was: "When woman, whom we call *abala* becomes *sabala*, all those who are helpless will become powerful." As per Gandhi, women are superior to men on the grounds of morality and spirituality. Gandhi had immense faith that women have a bigger role to play in the political, economic and social emancipation of the country. Gandhi had a great conviction in women's innate competence for nonviolence.

#### *Present Scenario of Women in India:*

As of 2021, India recorded a *gender ratio* of approximately 1,020 women to every one thousand men. According to the source, this marked the first time the gender ratio in the country leaned towards women. The *literacy rate* of India the Male literacy rate is 82.14% and Female literacy rate is 65.46% according to Census 2021. In 2021, reported *dowry death* cases in India amounted to nearly 6.8 thousand. This was a gradual decrease from the 2014, in which this number was approximately 8.5 thousand. As per statistics, the *divorce rate* in India is lower than 1%. That is, out of 1000, only 13 marriages in India end up in divorce. In 2021, the total number of *rape cases* reported in India amounted to over 31 thousand. This was an increase in rape cases compared to the previous year. The *female labor force* participation rate in India increased by 0.6 percentage points in 2021 in comparison to the previous year. In total, the rate amounted to 19.23 percent in 2021. Though pre-occupied with heavy responsibilities his views in this regard were clear and he tried to educate the public to accept women as equal partners. He said: "I am uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. In my opinion she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat daughters and sons on an equal footing of perfect equality."

*Conclusion:*

Gandhi considered women not only equal to men but in many ways superior to men. Gandhiji said that the girls are also capable of everything boys can do but the need of the time is to give them opportunities so that they can prove themselves to understand Gandhi's views on women in the context of social, economic and political issues. Mahatma Gandhi believed in economic independence for women. But still, the present situation is far behind the vision seen by our father of the nation. New problems are proliferating with every stage of women empowerment. New issues have spread after women started moving out from their home. Lot of criminal activities like rape, eve teasing, molestation, acid attack, Honor Killing, sexual exploitation at work, etc. have started taking place against women which are again creating obstacles in achieving the elusive dream of women empowerment. Governments do make laws against all type of crimes against women but the real need of the hour is to transform the mentality of the masses. They should teach their children, from childhood, to respect and honor the dignity of not only their family folk but women at large then only real revolution will come and the dream of women empowerment would be realized. Indian families still need to

consider society as a whole. Women empowerment should not only be for their family members alone but for all the women in the society.

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