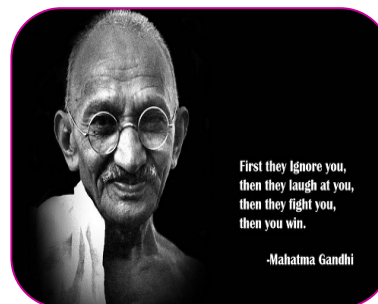




THE ROLE OF GANDHI IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT:

This paper traces the Gandhi's ideas on and about women in India. His ideology and the subsequent participation of women in the national movement. Gandhi's greatest contribution towards the raising of women's status " lay in his revolutionary approach to women in Society". He respected their " personal dignity" without "belittling women with men" equal task to perform in the achievement of freedom.

KEY WORDS: - national movement , women in Society , achievement of freedom.

INTRODUCTION

Gandhi made propaganda for self-reliance of women by postulating their economic independence, advocating social practices that emphasised simplicity and identification with the poor, "while encouraging the discipline of mind and body". So we see that Gandhi was " methodologically " a feminist, for him " the means were as important as the ends".¹ Gandhi's entrance into the national arena did lead to mass participation of women of national movement. Gandhi facilitated the acceptance of the woman's cause by the nationalist, particularly in the public life."²

The ideas of Gandhi helped women to overcome the problem of sexual and gender differences. In gender differences Gandhi put his thoughts, " In family property, there were same rights for son and daughter, same way the income of husband should be the same right of wife because only her greatest devotion husband can earn".³

Gandhi supports women education. Education played an important role in upliftment of women. For him primary education was same for men and women but later on it changed according to their physical structure. Gandhi condemned and cursed the bad traditions of child marriage, dowry system , prostitution. His views helped to reform the society and helped to empowerment of women.

OBJECTIVES:-

- 1] to empower the status of women of on society
- 2] to focus on the view of M.K. Gandhi on women.
- 3] To present the pre-independence woman status.

ANALYSIS:-

In Gandhian era the conditions of women was very poor and pitiable. Women were oppressed by men dominated society. For men women were puppet and playthings . In those conditions the great thinkers and political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi played an important role for the upliftment of women. Gandhi through his books and his speeches made changes in society. His role was multidimensional in the social reform specially the conditions of women.

In this paper we see his contribution for women welfare one by one. Introducing the picture of the 19th century women had to face the major problem regarding to gender differences.

1) Gender Differences :-

“ Gandhi’s social and personal experience compelled him to accept that men always used women as puppets”⁴ No doubt men were responsible for that. But women had to decide what they want in life and in which way they had been treated? He believed that if women wanted to play an important role on the sphere they avoided makeup and ornaments which attracted men.”⁵ His personal solution has been denial to the sex instinct.

Gandhi suggested women not to be weak. Because of wrong customs and traditions ladies had to suffer a lot. In Indian society it hurts Gandhi to kill a girl child. Gender difference was a social crime for him. He told equality of men and women equality of property.

2) Role of Education in upliftment of women :-

According to Gandhi, to use and expansion of natural rights of women education played an important role. The primary education had been same but other types of education must be different. Because physically both were different. Women were creative individuals who have a specific space for the construction of this creativity. To be able to be a good mother, a woman has to be given different education which gives her a training in not only basic domestic needs but also home economics and basic information about the world in which she is living.

3) Customs like child marriage, sati and dowry exploitation :-

Existing Hindu customs do not allow women to grow into her new role. Child marriage, sati pratha, dowry exploit women and reduce her dignity. Gandhi condemned these Hindu practices. From 1925 onwards, Gandhi starts a campaign against untouchability and writes a series of articles against the evils of Hinduism. As a part of the campaign, he also introduces the problem of child widows and actively advocates the remarriage of these widows. These acts, he insists, are against Swaraj- The social, educational, moral and political awakening of the people of India.⁶

By this awakening of people in India many people become his followers and great maharashtrian Saint Tukdoji Maharaj was one of them. Tukdoji Maharaj gave same wages to men and women. He clarified, Both of balance can make ideal life and community village. He said,

*“shri-purush hi don chake/jari parspar sahayake
tarich sansar eath kautuke / gram hoi aadarsh”⁷*

In sati pratha Gandhi asserts marriage is not only the union of bodies, but also of souls. Once marriage occurs, then “ man and women become one in soul”.⁸ A grown up widow who has been married comprehends this meaning of marriage and therefore should constrain herself from getting married. A Hindu widow who denied to remarry is a treasure to humanity.

4) Prostitution and Gandhian Thoughts:-

In the thoughts of Gandhi prostitution is a worst curse for the degeneration of men the same way it is insulting and sad thing which compels women to sell her purity. In the campaign against prostitution, he forced the resettlement of the prostitutes. Prostitutes are victims of man’s lust. For their resettlement Gandhi suggests to be volunteers. On the insistence of Gandhi some women used spinning wheel for their earnings.

5) Changing Image of Womens:-

Here we see a changing image of women in society. After a various champions, speeches and movements women started to participat in social works. Honour and respect, concepts evolved to. Legitimate Sexual exclusivity and re-establish women's place in the household are now given political legitimacy.⁹ Gandhi is now constructing a new image of women, they develops quantities and attributes such as courage , patience and purity. He gives examples of mythological heroines like Sita and Droupadi. Mythological roles are interwoven and reframed in to the prescriptions for the role that contemporary women involved in the national struggle, have to play from within their domestic space. Woman in the home a specific space in his political ideology, thereby legitimising this space.

6) Women and her earnings :-

According to Gandhi there were lot of places of earnings for women. Beat lacking of women workers men has to work in ladies institutions. For social reforming works, women's has been brilliant and sacrificing. From household work women can gave time to social work and there daily earnings.

7) Separate spheres of politics :-

Separate spheres means participation of women in political field rather to remain in home only. Adding new dimensions that of charity and social welfare, dedicated to the service of the nation. Now women in home started participated in political life. In spinning of khadi was turned in to the political message which was reposed on to the morally superior woman who in turn became the symbol and conscious of the new nation in the making., and became political symbol of women's participation in the 1920's. However, in 1930's the women came out in large numbers on the streets to perform Satyagraha.¹⁰ The fight for country freedom, the protection of her wealth and the honour offer women becomes in Gandhi the programme for future. Kasturba had led a group of volunteers in a Satyagraha before 'Dandi March'.

Participation of ladies in politics helped ladies to put their problems at national level. In 1925 Sarojini Naydu selected as congress president. Same rights for women in corress leaders made women aware about their own rights. Women got new confidence. In 1931 at Karachi conference .Congress passed an act of same status and place form women in politics. Thus we saw Gandhi's efforts made women to make new political sphere.¹¹

CONCLUSION :-

This paper put forward the Gandhian ideology is no doubt taking an enormous leap by giving a significant role to women in contemporary Indian society. He made women realize that she has a significant and dominant role to play in the family. He made possible not only involvement of women in politics, but made her realize that the national movement could not succeed without her involvement in the struggle.

By writing about the problems Gandhi make them aware and gave power to struggle against the bad customs. Gandhi's separate sphere women now can break the laxman rekha of home only by denying her biology. He shows women her strength and helped it to develop. In that social conditions, it was very difficult to made any efforts of women empowerment. But Gandhiji made it possible.

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