



WOMEN'S DIGNITY IN GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Human being is the highest creation in this world not for their physical strength but because of mental strength, i.e. reasoning power. Nevertheless, women are considered as weak on the base of their physical strength. Then how it is justified? For our wrong attitude towards women, they are being suppressed from long time. Gandhiji was of the opinion that, if by strength is mean moral power, then women are immeasurably men's superior. Women's suppression is not only for men's wrong attitude towards women, but also because of their ignorance about their self-power and potentiality. Women should know about their inner power and utilize this power to remove themselves from all kind of injustice.

Establishment of women's dignity is a fight for women's right. So, it is also important for women of the country to involve themselves for the same with their active participation. That is only possible when they understand about their own potentiality, they educate themselves. Gandhiji was of the opinion that until and unless women on the basis of education and knowledge do not find their proper place in social and economic fields, they could not achieve self-respect for themselves.

Education among women in India has given them chances to improve their personality to think independently, to choose their careers and their companion of life. He advised to men to free themselves from their sins of injustice to women and at the same time he emphasized the women's freeing themselves from the slavery of custom, whims and fancies of their own and realizes their own capacity and strength. He pointed out that the progress of the country is dependent on the realization of the equal status of man and woman. According to Gandhi, education for women was the need of the time that would ensure their moral development and make them capable of occupying the same platform as that of men.

Keywords: Women-Empowerment, self-consciousness, moral power, Gender-justice, Basic Education.

Introduction:

A lot of works have been done for the upliftment of women. Among all Mahatma Gandhi was the first to have publicly spoken about the qualities of spiritual favour and moral capabilities of womanhood. Even, according to Gandhi, women are most suited to fight with new weapons of non-violence and truth. But this upliftment of women is not possible without the self-consciousness of women; they first have to know about their power. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the basic points of the development of the self-consciousness of woman laid down by Gandhiji and highlights the status of woman in the present world. It is true that apart from recognition of woman as an independent human being, the



development of a nation would become impossible. It is not subjugating woman but both man and woman are equally essential for the survival of humanity.

Women as not a weaker sex:

Human being is the highest creation in this world not because of physical strength but because of mental strength i.e., reasoning power. So on the base of physical strength men's superiority and to treat woman as weaker gender is a kind of ignorance of their part. In Gandhiji's word, it is libel; it is man's injustice to women. Though we must accept the difference between men and women, but this difference is not between strong and weak, it is the difference of hardness and softness. Men by nature hard and women by nature soft and to maintain our society there are needed to be so. Because according to the role of women to be performed, e.g., to give birth, there must have softness in their very nature. As to grow a plant there must have soft or wet soil, which is not possible in hard soil. But when soil takes its form of softness, it does not mean that soil has lost its strength, it is only to give a life. In the same way women by nature is soft not only to tolerate all kinds of exploitation against her. Women have the power in themselves to be sustained in this world. And how far it is true it can be observed in our daily life, as now a day's women are making themselves equal in every workplace with men.

Gandhiji said, "If by strength is mean moral power, then women are immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater power of endurance, has she not greater courage." Instead of call women weak, if men could understand their strength and utilize this power positively then they can progress more and as a whole society too. So there is an urgent need of recognizing the equal status of men and women; which is the main subject matter of this paper.

Gandhi's perspective on men and women:

According to Gandhi, "Men and women are equal in status, but are not identical; they are a peerless pair complementary to one another." Instead of comparison, there is need to understand each other. By nature men and women are interrelated. So for a peaceful and progressive life, they must care and above all respect for each other. Gandhiji also wanted that men and women should enjoy absolute equality in life and women should not suffer any legal disabilities. He said, "Women must have an equal legal status."

In the society there must have supplementary duty between men and women. Without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived. This is completely non-sense to waste time on 'Who is better than other?' there is no need of such kind of question. Actually, there is an absolute oneness of humanity; the differences between men and women are not in the essence. Each is complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help. So instead of quarrel, there need to have active help. This way both can realise the fullest self-capacity and thereby well being of society.



But we not should be misunderstood about this kind of equal status between men and women. To be equal it does not mean blind imitation of men. According to Gandhiji, women are much more superior to men in the application of non-violence or love towards other fellow beings. So he said about to follow the quality of women e.g., kindness, tolerance, etc. in everybody's life. But in our life we are unaware about our own potentiality, the Divine nature. So firstly, we have to realise our Divine nature, the absolute oneness in the society. Only by this realisation a society can be ideal with the equal contribution of men and women. So, there need to have self-consciousness among men and women.

Thus Gandhiji pointed out the problem of social injustice of woman from both the sides- from the side of man who do injustice and from the side of woman those who have to bear that injustice. He attempted to show to man to free themselves from their sins of injustice to woman and the same time he advised woman to get rid of themselves from the slavery of customs.

Self-consciousness of Women:

Though there are various laws to ensure women's security, to safeguard women's right; but at the same time exploitation on women is raising at an alarming rate. All fight for women's empowerment is not producing the expected result only because of the absence of self-consciousness among women. Till now they are in surroundings of dogmas that their life is to serve the men, and they have to tolerate all the injustice are been done to them by men. Though this picture is changing slowly day-by-day, but we need entire change of our mindset. Gandhiji wanted women to be least aware of their position and the actual hard-ships that they had been undergoing. According to Gandhi, our first attempt "...should be directed towards awakening in the minds of as many women as possible a consciousness of their present condition. We can bring home to our women the sad realities of their present condition without, in the first instance, giving them any literary education."

Women must aware of their inherent capacities. They must refuse to be the slaves of their own whims and fancies and the slaves of men. If they want to give out the proper service to society it must come-out of their heart, and then they will captivate not men, but humanity. It is the birth right of every human. Gandhiji was in favour of simplicity and beauty of heart. External beauty changes time to time but the beauty of heart is forever. Gandhiji suggested that, "Women must cease to consider her as the object of man's lust. The remedy is more in her hand than men's. She must refuse to adorn herself for men, including her husband, if she will be an equal with partner with man."

Conclusion:

The conclusion can be drawn from the following discussion that, women can restore their dignity by the awareness of their inner potentiality. By knowing herself she could overcome herself from all kind of injustice which have been doing with her. So before blaming the man, she must first know the self power and have to utilize this power for the remedy of their problem. If women are not conscious



about their potentiality and they do not respect her, then how is it possible to expect the same respect from others?

And also they must raise this consciousness in their mind that they have the spiritual power by which they can earn respect for themselves and can free from all kind of exploitation. Kitchen, husband, children is not only the life of women, except all this there have life for women in external world. But it does not mean that for external life women would leave her internal life, i.e. family life. She has to perform the entire role in family or outside the family as proper as possible, with her equal partner man. They have to perform all the duty together or can divide the duty to handle the situation and should live a life with respect for each other. Education among woman in India has given them chances to improve their self-consciousness, to think independently and to choose their carriers as it has been prescribed in Gandhi's thought.

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