



## THE MORAL POWER OF WOMAN: A STUDY OF GANDHI'S ETHICAL HUMANISM

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**Abstract:** If we look at the ancient history of India, while women played an important role in some aspects of this society, the attitude towards them varied from time to time. Mahatma Gandhi highlighted the issue of women because some of the flaws in society violated women's rights and treated women secondarily. He believed that strengthening the role of women in society for the future of India was a sign of progress.

**Key words and phrases:** Mahatma Gandhi, Putlibay, Kasturba, Women, Indian Society, Indian philosophy, marriage, sati, ethics.

**I am firmly of opinion that India's salvation depends on the sacrifice and enlightenment of her women.(Mahatma Gnadhi)**

### Introduction.

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the great figures who has left an indelible mark on the history of India and the world. Even today, there is a growing interest in studying the scientific, political, and philosophical worldviews of Mahatma Gandhi. In the words of Albert Einstein: I am convinced that in the future, it is not materialism, but great and noble individuals like Gandhi who will lead humanity to good deeds. We should all be thankful that destiny created us as such, as a contemporary with a role model for future generations". In the twentieth century, he showed both theoretically and practically how to turn hatred into love for the whole world, not just for India. Gandhi proved to all mankind that any progress, any peace, is possible. According to a June 15, 2007, UN General Assembly resolution, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday was unanimously approved as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence on October 2. This shows that Mahatma Gandhi's ideas are still relevant today.

### Metod and material.

This is a qualitative research using the content, comparative-historical, characteristic analysis approach. Several books and lectures by Mahatma Gandhi have also been used in the study of women in Indian society.

### Research and results.

Even in today's modern world, the name Mahatma Gandhi is not associated with the word Peace. Now the question is, how was Gandhi formed? Who has played a big role in making this person such a person? First of all, of course, we can say that his mother is Putlibay. Gandhi's mother was a simple and devout woman.

Mahatma Gandhi recalls of his mother: "I have the impression of a holy woman about my mother. He was very religious and could not think of eating without praying. He considered it



his duty to go to the temple of Vishnuparasats every day. If I'm not mistaken, my mother never made a mistake. He was a strict mathematician and diligently performed rituals. I remember that one day he fell ill during chandrayan, [2] but his illness did not prevent him from fasting. It was not uncommon for him to fast for two or three days. He was accustomed to eating only once a day during the chaturmas [3]. As if that weren't enough, he was fasting in one of the chaturmas. On another occasion, he vowed not to eat until he saw the sun. At such times, we children would not look down from the sky to tell our mother that the sun had risen[4]. It is known that in Barsat [5] (rainy season) the sun is not visible at all for many days. "I remember one day when the sun came up, we grabbed our feet and ran to tell my mom. She came running to see the sun with her own eyes, but the sun was setting again and my mother was no longer salty. "He won't do anything," he said boldly. "God doesn't want me to eat today". That fact must be taken into account".

Gandhi remembers the same thing about his mother. "She was a clear-minded woman, she knew the affairs of state, and the women in the office praised and respected her intelligence. Taking advantage of my childhood, I often followed my mother to the office, and I still remember her having a lively conversation with the widow of the grateful owner"[7]. This shows that the role of the mother in the formation of Gandhi's worldview is very important. All religious ceremonies in the family were strictly observed. Parents have taught their children to adhere to a basic moral and religious duty and not to do any harm to those who live on earth [8].

At the same time, Gandhi's nurse also played a role in his life. That's what Gandhi said when Sanatana became a Hindu. I remember learning the religion from my nanny, who was very religious and taught me all kinds of prayers. [9] Gandhi always remembered that his nanny taught him the Ramnom prayer. This prayer was with Gandhi from his infancy until his death. When I read it to my father, Ramayana made a big impression on me. It was read by Ram's biggest fan, Ladh Maharaja of Bileshwar"[10]. These initial factors alone prompted Gandhi to focus on women's issues in Indian society. Following the customs of early marriage, Mohandas married a girl named Kasturbay, who was his age, at the age of thirteen.

The is my painful duty to have to record my marriage at the age of thirteen. I can see no moral argument in support of such a preposterously early marriage. I was married, not betrothed. It appears I was betrothed thrice, though I do not know when. I do not think it meant to me anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum- beating, marriage processions, and a strange girl to play with[11].

Later, Gandhi remembered with deep emotion how he had entered the role of husband in his youth. Fortunately, however, the young people fell in love with each other deeply, and despite all the difficulties and worries and frequent separations, they remained faithful to each other throughout their lives[12].

Gandhi was deeply troubled and disgusted by the problem of early marriage and child marriage in India, the problem of girls and women.

I passionately desire the utmost freedom for our women. I detest child marriages. I shudder to see a child widow, and shiver with rage when a husband just widowed contracts with brutal indifference another marriage. I deplore the criminal indifference of parents who deep their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate and bring them up only for the purpose of marrying them off to some young man of means. Notwithstanding all this grief and rage, I realize the difficulty of the problem. Women must have votes and an equal legal status. But the problem



does not end there. It only commences at the point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation. –YI, 21-7-21[13].

For two thousand years in this vast country they have been living, thinking, feeling according to the “Laws of Manu”, and they say: “A wife is subordinate to a man all her life: first to her father, then to her husband and, finally, to her son”. She should always be kept under the supervision of a man.

For a woman, a wedding is a “second birth”. She becomes the “husband's half”, however, playing only a subordinate role with him. The wife is responsible for her husband's health and life. That is why the widow is considered guilty of his death. This event turns her whole life upside down. Just as a severed hand cannot live without a body, so a widow, cut off from her half by the striking blow of death, loses her right to life. Here is what the Hindus themselves think about this: “The custom of sati is glorious for women, because living without a husband is like being among demons. To become satima is a blissful and inevitable goal in the life of many women”.

The Sati-Prevention-Law (Law on the Prevention of Cases of Self-Immolation of Widows) was passed in 1987. Since then, any attempt to justify the behavior of the Satim, let alone exalt her or erect a temple on the site of her death, has been prohibited. This custom was forbidden to the Hindus in 1829 by the British colonial authorities. It was a criminal act to burn the widows of your people, following the letter of British law. [14]

Mahatma Gandhi spoke about the custom of sati in the following way: “If a wife intends to prove her loyalty and inescapable devotion to her husband, then let the husband also prove his loyalty and inescapable devotion to his wife. But we have never heard of a husband who would go up to his wife's funeral pyre. This is why it is clear that the practice of burning widows is rooted in the superstition, stupidity and selfishness of men”. It couldn't be better.

Interestingly, the earliest Hindu texts do not mention the custom of sati, although they describe in detail the funeral ceremonies. Later, however, the rules governing the life of widows became stricter. They were once allowed to remarry; then they began to demand celibacy from them; later allowed to choose between celibacy and burning at the stake; then they considered only self-immolation an act worthy of a woman, and, finally, downright glorified this act.

## The Dowry System

The system has to go. Marriage must cease to be a matter of arrangement made by parents for money. The system is intimately connected with caste. So long as the choice is restricted to a few hundred-young men or young women of a particular caste, the system, will persist no matter what is said against it. The girls or boys or their parents will have to break the bonds of caste if the evil is to be eradicated. All this means education of a character that will revolutionize the mentality of the youth of the nation. –H, 23-5-36, 117 [15].

Mahatma Gandhi cites Ahimsa as a way to destroy such an ugly system. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget that she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. (SB, 241)



# Western European Journal of Historical Events and Social Science

Volume 3, Issue 10 October 2025

<https://westerneuropeanstudies.com/index.php/4>

ISSN (E): 2942-1926

Open Access| Peer Reviewed

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My own opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help. But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages past, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him. But the seers among men have recognized her equal status.

Feminism in India is a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for women in India. It is about advocating for women's rights in Indian society. Like their feminist counterparts around the world, feminists in India are committed to gender equality: the right to work for equal pay, the right to equal access to health care and education, and equal political rights. Indian feminists have also struggled with cultural issues in India's patriarchal society, such as inheritance laws. The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, which began in the middle of the 19th century, began when European male colonists began to oppose the social evil of Sati; the second stage, from 1915 to India's independence, when Gandhi included women's movements in the Leave India movement and independent women's organizations began to emerge; and finally, the third phase, the post-independence period, which focused on the fair treatment of women at home after marriage, at work and the right to political parity. During the formative years of women's rights movements, the distinction between the sexes was taken more or less for granted, since their roles, functions, goals and desires were different. As a result, they had to be not only grown differently, but also treated differently. Over time, this difference in itself became the main reason for the emergence of women's movements. The reformers of the early 19th century argued that the difference between men and women was not the reason for the subordination of women in society. However, later reformers were of the opinion that it is this distinction that subordinates women to their roles in society, such as mothers. Consequently, there was a need for due diligence for women's rights. With the formation of women's organizations and their own participation in campaigns, their role as mothers was again emphasized, but in a different light: this time with an argument for women's right to speech, education and emancipation. However, the image of a woman with a mother as a symbol has undergone changes over time - from the emphasis on the family to the creation of an archetypal figure of the mother, evoking deep, often atavistic images.

## **The first stage: 1850-1915**

Kamini Roy (poet and suffragette) became the first female honors graduate in India in 1886. The colonial step into modernity brought with it the concepts of democracy, equality and individual rights. The emergence of the concept of nationalism and introspection of discriminatory practices led to a movement for social reform concerning caste and gender relations. This first phase of feminism in India was initiated by men to eradicate social evil from sati (self-immolation widow), to widow remarriage, to prohibit child marriage, and to reduce illiteracy, and to regulate age of consent and securing property rights through legal intervention. In addition to this, some high caste Hindu women rejected the restrictions they faced in the brahminical tradition. However, efforts to improve the status of women in Indian society were somewhat thwarted by the late nineteenth century, when nationalist movements emerged in India. These movements have resisted "colonial intervention in gender relations", especially in the area of family relations. In the mid to late nineteenth century, there was a national form of resistance to any colonial effort to "modernize" the Hindu family. This



included controversy over the age of consent, which erupted after the government tried to raise the age of marriage for women.

## Second stage: 1915-1947

During this period, the struggle against colonial rule intensified. Nationalism became the main reason. The assertion of Indian supremacy became an instrument of cultural renaissance, which led to the creation of an important model of Indian femininity, similar to that of the Victorian era: distinctive, but separate from the public space. Gandhi legitimized and expanded the social activities of Indian women, initiating them into a non-violent movement of civil disobedience against British rule. He extolled their feminine roles of caring, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and tolerance; and carved a niche for those in the public arena. Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagrams of Borsad and Bardoli. Women's organizations such as the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) have sprung up. Women have struggled with issues related to women's political participation, women's suffrage, community awards and leadership in political parties.

The 1920s was a new era for Indian women and was defined as "feminism" that was responsible for the creation of local women's associations. These associations focused on women's education, developed livelihood strategies for working class women, and organized national-level women's associations such as the All India Women's Conference. AIWC was closely associated with the Indian National Congress. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, he worked in the framework of nationalist and anti-colonial freedom movements. This made the mass mobilization of women an integral part of Indian nationalism. Therefore, women were a very important part of various nationalist and anti-colonial efforts, including civil disobedience movements in the 1930s.

After independence, the All India Women's Conference continued to operate, and in 1954 the Communist Party of India formed its own women's wing known as the National Federation of Indian Women. However, feminist agendas and movements became less active in the immediate aftermath of India's independence in 1947, as nationalist nation-building programs took over feminist concerns.

The participation of women in the struggle for freedom has developed their critical awareness of their role and rights in an independent India. This led to the inclusion of suffrage and civil rights for women in the Indian constitution. It is envisaged to improve the status of women through affirmative action, protection of the health of mothers and children (nurseries), equal pay for equal work, etc. The state has taken on a patronizing role in relation to women. For example, the Indian Constitution states that women are the "weaker part" of the population and therefore need help to act on an equal footing [16].

## After 1947

Indira Gandhi (née Nehru) was the only child of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. She is the first and only female Prime Minister of India and the second longest in tenure. In 1966, Indira Gandhi became the first female Prime Minister of India.

The participation of women in political parties is associated with a growing demand for equal rights. The INC held power until the 1990s. As the INC moved away from welfare politics, other parties emerged that challenged the INC by making poverty the center of their agenda. In 2004, the INC regained power through the participation of women. INC has increased the participation of women by setting a 33% quota for women at all party levels.

In June 2009, the INC appointed a woman as the first speaker of the Lok Sabha, and also supported the election of Pratibha Patil, India's first female president. Women were involved in the early creation of the BJP. The BJP promoted greater representation of women through the development of women's leadership programs, financial assistance to women candidates, and the implementation of a 33% reserve for women in party leadership positions. The BJP has garnered the support of women, focusing on issues such as the Unified Civil Code to give equal rights to women and men regardless of religion. They also spoke out against violence against Indian women. CPI also supports gender inequality issues, including addressing violence nikita ullu through the National Federation of Indian Women. [17]

## Conclusion.

Mahatma Gandhi stressed that free women also have a role to play in the liberation of India and that they have the same rights as men in building an independent country. (Feminism) didn't make sense or become a working principle in India's life until the country gained independence in 1947 and adopted a democratic government. The Indian Constitution then granted equality, freedom from discrimination based on sex or religion, and guaranteed religious freedom. In addition, seven five-year plans have been developed to promote women's health, education, employment and well-being. In the sixth five-year plan, women were even declared "partners in development".

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2. Note. Chandrayan (Sanskrit - चंद्ररथान्) eats little food at this time, shortens the appetite, thereby curbing the appetite.
3. Note. Chaturmas (Sanskrit - चतुरमास) Chaturmas is a sacred four-month period during which people pray, bathe in the holy river, and spend these months in various ways, observing silence, or fasting. During these months, Vishnu rests and goes to sleep, his duty being temporarily performed by the god Shiva. Shiva begins to cleanse the earth from evils, filth and misguidance. Protects people who do good. No weddings or other ceremonies are held during these months.
4. The same work, 9 p.
5. Note. Barsat (Hindi - बरसात rainy season) A year in India consists of six seasons: Spring, summer, barsat (rainy season), autumn, winter, cold season. There is a lot of rain this season.
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# Western European Journal of Historical Events and Social Science

Volume 3, Issue 10 October 2025

<https://westerneuropeanstudies.com/index.php/4>

ISSN (E): 2942-1926

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