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GANDHI'S APPROACH ON WOMEN AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

Gandhi is one of the most important persons of the world. He wanted to establish a classless society irrespective of any caste, race, religion and gender. He worked for the upliftment of the status of women in the society. According to Mahatma Gandhi, women had been deprived of many opportunities and had been suppressed under various conditions. There was a lack of social justice among them. They were taught to regard themselves as slaves of men. Gandhi tried to make women realize their full status in society and their roles as equal to men.

The aim of this paper is to discuss Gandhi's attempts to improve the status of women in society and to find out the various social injustices faced by women in the society.

INTRODUCTION:

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most influential persons of the world. His thoughts and works inspired many lives and improved the conditions of masses. He tried to establish a classless society irrespective of any caste, race, religion and gender.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this paper are-

1. To explore Gandhi's approach to improve the status of women in society.

2. To find out the miserable conditions of women in society.

METHODOLOGY;

For this study analytic method has been used in order to analyze Gandhi's approach on women and social justice. This study is based on secondary data, books, etc.

STATUS OF WOMEN:

Women in our traditional society are believed to be confined to their household works, look after their families and depend on their husbands or other male family members. The difference between male and female can be seen from the post Vedic Age. Sometimes, women are regarded as the root cause of all evil. Women had an inferior status as compared to men. Custom and practices such as child marriage, sati, dowry, pathetic conditions for widowhood, illiteracy, verbal abuse for women, etc. made the life of women very difficult to live. Their abilities were destroyed and their scope for development was removed.

Indian women, after the death of their husband, were forced to die. They were also tortured by their husbands or the family members of their husbands if they refused to fulfill their demands. Most of them were also deprived of their education and were not allowed to move out anywhere on their own. Thus, the conditions of women were very miserable. But with the steps taken by Gandhi for women, the conditions of women have been progressed. Gandhi gave a very different outlook for the status of women in society and thus the social justice of women took place in the Indian society.

GANDHI'S VIEWS ON SOCIAL EVIL:

According to Gandhi, there is urgent need of social reforms to improve the conditions of women in society. He realized that certain practices of society hindered the development of women. He realized that the child marriage should be stopped and considered it to be immoral. They should instead be provided with education. He was also totally against dowry. He believed that there must be understanding, love and respect for each other in every marriage. According to him, if dowry was made as the basis of a marriage by a man then it is a disrespect to his education and womanhood is dishonored. Gandhi also suggested widow remarriage and requested the young generation of the country to marry widow. Gandhi was also in favour of women's education. He believed that only literate and educated women can help themselves to fight for the betterment of their conditions. He also tried to abolish sati system where women were forced to die after the death of their husbands. According to him, women have the full right to live and take decisions independently of their own. Gandhi was also against purdah system. According to him, it hinders the independence of women and considered it to be a "vicious, brutal and barbarous" practice. Gandhi took active steps to improve the status or conditions of women.

SUGGESTIONS BY GANDHI:

In order to improve the status of women and give them equal rights as men, he suggested various ways. The first and the most primitive requirement is education. He believed that the status of

women can be improved if and only if they try to determine their own problems. According to Gandhi, education is the main tool which can help women to be aware of their miserable conditions. They could also be able to fight for their natural rights. They can also help their children in their education which will help to build a better nation. Education also helps women to earn their livelihood and they can become self-dependent.

According to Gandhi, equal share of property between men and women is another tool to provide social justice to women. The married women must have equal share in their husband's power and privileges. Both men and women must have equal power which must be transmitted to their children equally in the form of education.

Gandhi was in support of women being self-dependent. According to him, women must be self-dependent to earn their livelihood. Most of the people believe that economic independence of women may hamper the domestic lives but Gandhi did not support it. He believed that women must be paid as equal to men. According to Gandhi, if women also start working and earn their livelihood as men then it will add extra income for their household which will further lead to better economic conditions for the entire family. He, at the same time, realized that the duties of women for their household were as important as their husbands' duty to earn.

Gandhi recommended voting rights for women for equal status in the society. Being the citizens of the nation, women must be given full rights to vote according to their own choice.

In the traditional society, sons were preferred more than daughters. In most cases, the daughters were killed before or after their birth. Gandhi was totally against it. According to him, daughters were as important as their sons. Both women and men were necessary to build a nation.

Gandhi recommended equal rights to women to take part in all activities as that of men. He believed that women had the same mental capabilities as that of men to participate in all activities. They must be given equal freedom as that of men.

Women in the traditional society were considered to be the object to fulfill the wants of men. Gandhi strictly suggested women to stop considering themselves as so which will help them to earn their dignity as well as save themselves from being tortured by men. He also believed that women had their strength and ability to work for their own and help in the development of the nation. He suggested that women should not fulfill any unethical demands of men. He had full confidence on women's capability for the upliftment of the society.

Gandhi organized many constructive activities where women participated actively. They manufactured salt by themselves and sold it from house to house, rebelled against foreign goods and used only local, self-made goods, worked for Hindu-Muslim unity and also supported families when men were away. Gandhi also incorporated women to participate in 'satyagraha movement' and in 'freedom struggle'.

CONCLUSION:

In the conclusion it can be said that Gandhi left no stone unturned to improve the conditions of women, uplift their status, abolished social evils and encouraged women to participate in many social activities. He is successful in his attempts due to which the status of women at present has been improved.

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