

## **“EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN:A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IMAM KHOMEINI AND MAHATMA GANDHI”**

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### **Abstract**

In this today's modern world when the world came to be known as global village, the emancipation and empowerment of women has become the most significant factor of concern, but in practicality, yet, the women has not given his real status and honor in the society. Still, we are observing in our society in day to day life that how the women are exploited and misused harshly, with different social evils like as dowry, early marriage slavery, caste system etc. Both the great leaders Imam Khomeini and Mahatma Gandhi has highlighted the role and status of women in modern times. Both the leaders stressed that the development of women is only possible with education of women at any cost and after that they will get proper place in political, economic and social fields. Without education and proper guidance they would not be able to maintain their self-respect and status in the society. Both the leaders recommended the same. Both believed in the equality of men and women. Gandhi wanted economic and political freedom of women to become self-dependent and to stand on their own feet. Both the leaders inspired their nations to take solid and concrete steps about the education of women that will bring them out of clutches of these age old customs and rituals. Imam Khomeini wanted crèches to be opened near the workshops and educational institutions of women. Gandhiji wanted to build a society based on justice, peace and equality among all.

**Keywords: Imam Khomeini, Gandhi, women, emancipation, empowerment, education.**

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## **Introduction**

Both the leaders were great social and political reformers played a significant part in eradicating the social evils committed against the women of the age old centuries. Gandhi realized that some tradition and custom of the Indian society were difficult to the spirit of development of the women of the country. So Gandhi quoted, “it is good to swim in the waters of tradition but to sink in them is suicide”

From the Islamic point of view the role of women in society is becoming significant from every aspect of life, like Political social and economic. The status of women under the noble Quran is the function of earing and training of true human beings. Both man and men are same before Islam. Islam wants women to enjoy the high rank of true humanity, which is theirs, not be a plaything in the hands of men. Islam has provided a special regard for women. Women had lost their values, dignities, when the Islam appeared in the Arabian Peninsula at that time. It raised them up and gave the back their faith, pride and respect. It makes women equal with man.

## **Gandhi on Women**

Being a great social and political reformer Gandhiji tried to reform the social evils as against women in the modern era. He strongly fight against social wrongs. The main target of his criticism was child marriage, dowry system and slavery. Also he was against dowry marriages as heartless and said girls should never marry those men who are demanding dowry for their luxurious life. He paid great attention towards untouchables as he called them Harijans. He also highlighted that women is a companion of man with equal mental and moral perspectives. Its main aim in Indian society was to keep out woman from their homes and made them to participate in the political and social activities. Gandhi also tried to eradicate the evil of communalism from society. His focus of vision towards women was all round development and emancipation in the society and this became his one of the noble aim in life. He said that women should be awakened and aware of their reality, so that they can realize their own honor, dignity and self-esteem and can shed off their deep rooted sense of inferiority. Superior quote of Gandhi is “when women whom we call abala (weak) becomes sabala (strong), all those who are helpless will become powerful”.The Gandhian views were highly praised by educated, urban, rural, foreign and Indian society at large. He also stressed “men and women need to be educated

equally in housework because the home belongs to both”. He wrote “the status of women should be equal with man”. Again he quoted “to call women the weaker sex is libel; it is injustice to women”. “If I was born as women, I would raise in rebellion against any pretention on the part of men that women is born to be his plaything, I have mentally become a women in order to steal into my wife heart until I decided to treat her differently then I used to do, so I restored to her all her rights by dispossessing myself of all my so called rights as her husband and you see her today as simple as myself”. Gandhi highlighted another three important factors that promote women Emancipation like as employment, education and change in social structure. All the elements are equally significant and mutually related to each other.

Gandhiji said about the emancipation of women as they should be emancipated from all types of slavery. He was strongly against the purdah and utmost oppression of Hindu widow and Sati system. He allowed women to take in Salt Satyagraha in no tax Campaign was a sign for women to take part in politics. By Gandhiji, the main aim empowerment and emancipation of women is to make them enable to realize her worth and it is also essential for our national development. Women empowerment is needed so as to that they can work and think independently, prove their vulnerability and genius, to fight with subjugation and injustice and become able to take part in public and private affairs. The empowerment of women is both a constitutional and a social necessity.

Gandhi believed that the education of both boys and girls at the primary and higher level would make them different, “as nature has made women and men different, it is important to maintain a difference between the educations of the two. True, they are equals in life, but their duties are different. It is the right of women to rule the home and man is outside field master. It is the women which spends and saves the man’s earning, she is the teacher of her children and therefore, mother to the whole nation.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Imam Khomeini on Women**

“Islam is basically a religion which teaches mankind how to fight against oppression and inequalities, and how to build a healthy and progressive community”. “Islam not only endorses the freedom of women but has also been the founder of women’s liberty in all dimensions of her

being”. “Islam has emphasized the equality of man and woman and has given them the right to determine their destinies by themselves. In other words, both are eligible to enjoy all freedom and liberties”.

Islam wants men and women to develop equally and wants to cut the chains in women which were subjected during the age of ignorance of pre- Islamic times. It is very difficult to make a vision on harsh circumstances of women before the onset of Islam. It is only Islam which brought up women and gave her back their identity. Islam took women by hand and made them equal with men, whereas before the birth of prophet Mohammad (saw) she had no role and status, and Islam gave them honor, dignity, role, status, strength and character. Islam also wants that women to attain the high rank and status of true humanity women must have a share in framing their own destiny. Islam wants you to train to become perfect human being.

Unfortunately before the onset of Islam, women were treated as animals or even worse than animals, it was a period of ignorance before the Islam. Then Islam came and bestowed its blessings on mankind, it dragged women out of that state of oppression, and it pulled her from that type of ignorance or unknowingness.

Imam Khomeini the great revolutionary leader was also against oppression and aggression of both men and women. He wanted women to participate in the outside world too, but he could never accept the homes and children to be neglected. He, like others, was for the better future of the country, and wanted women to be efficient in their work.

Imam Khomeini gave a historical speech about women, its role and status and highlighted that: you have the honor of being mothers, which is factor that you have upper hand than men. It is yours responsibility to train children in your laps as it is considered as his first school. A good mother brings up a good child, but God forbids, if the mother is misguided, the child will be misguided. If the mother taught his children goodness, virtuousness and morality he will grow up with a good nature, with that purity of spirit and goodness of deed that has been nurtured in him.

The Great revolutionary leader Ayatollah Imam Khomeini was also against the oppression and aggression of women. He wanted women to take part in outside world too, but he could never accept the homes and children to be neglected. He always praised women in their works. He wanted women to play a decisive role in maintaining its home in society and likes to live an independent life. He was in favor of purdah system of women. He wanted women to take part in economic and political fields within the boundaries of Islam. To facilitate this Khomeini wanted crèches to be opened near their work place.

### **Comparison between the two**

Both leaders recommended the same for women. Both believed in the equality of men and women. Gandhi wanted political and economic freedom for women as well. He said that the old traditions brought bondage and slavery for women, should be done away with, but at the same time he was of the view that to look after the house, was a women's job which should not be neglected at any cost, also it was a view point of Imam Khomeini. To quote him "in my opinion it is degrading for man and women that a women should be called to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. There is as much bravery in keeping one's house in order and condition as there is in defending it against an attack from outside. At another place he has quoted thus "let it be a man's privilege to protect woman but let no woman of India feel helpless in the absence of a man and in the event of his failing to perform the sacred duty of protecting her".

Imam Khomeini wanted women to play a critical role in the revolution. He was also of the opinion that the country belongs to both women and man and women are too justified in fighting for freedom of freedom of their country. Imam Khomeini also appreciated the role of women in the national struggle, he said that men have achieved their aim with the back of women where man failed but women succeeded at times. The praised personality of Imam Khomeini pleased thousands of women of Iran to come out of homes in the streets with babies in their arms to give a hard fight to their enemies. It was the Islamic revolution which changed the role of the women in society. It is estimated that there were 60,000 prostitutes under the Shah's regime, but with the advent of revolution under the great leadership of Imam Khomeini rehabilitated as respectable members of the society, which is measured as highly remarkable achievement of the revolution.

Imam Khomeini also wanted women of Iran to be financially independent as women of other countries, but without losing their honour and dignity in society.

On the other hand Gandhi said “women has been suppressed under the custom and law for which man was responsible in the shaping of which she had no hand. A women has as much right to shape her own destinies as man has to shape his. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women, instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers”. Imam Khomeini also highlighted enthusiasm and inspiration for Iranian women. He also wanted Iranian women to be financially independent as other’s countries women without losing their dignity and honour. He accredited ultimate victory to women rather than men.

Besides the high efforts from both leaders for the emancipation of women, it is difficult to forget those who are going to take prostitution as their occupation. It was alone Gandhiji who protest and raised voice against the reason of the so called “fallen women” and suggested them to earn their livelihood by spinning and weaving and live a life of *sanyasisor* solitaries. If these prostitute women are willing to leave their profession. He kept man responsible for “fallen women life” role as they drove them into the prostitution to satisfy his desires and needs, he committed great atrocities in women. So he forwarded the concept of *Swaraj* which means emancipation of fallen women. He highlighted the fact that both boys and girls should be enough mature at the time of marriage and both should have a right to select their life partner. He stressed that child marriage should be banned as its results on child girls and boys is harsh, and “such marriage should be declared null and void from the very beginning”. The dream of society which Gandhiji wanted was based on peace, equality and social justice. In 1920 Gandhiji’s message was “what is considered desirable for women and that a widow should have the same discretion as a widower about remarriage”.

On the other hand Imam Khomeini always praised the role of Iranian women in the Islamic movement. His quote for Iranian women “hail to women throughout the country, who spiritually inspired men in this cherished Emancipation movement. The women’s role in the society is much superior to that of men. We ascribed our final victory to women rather than men, since these respectful women were in the frontline initiated towards national liberty- when young

women rushed to the streets to stage political demonstration in front of tanks and cannon balls, men assumed greater initiative and power”. Imam Khomeini said “they were only walking shoulder to shoulder with men but even moved in front of all. The women of Iran not only made material sacrifices but also human sacrifices” and again quoted “our people with bare hands and without weapons arouse and resisted against modern weapon sacrifice of women in Islamic revolution made the Imam call them “the pillars of Iran” again at another place he said “we are indebted to women for the victory of Islamic revolution of Iran. Our dear women paved the way for our men to become courageous and brave, I always pray for them”.

On the other hand, Gandhiji raised voice and said “about women” is the embodiment of love and inner strength. She may be physically weaker than men but her inner spirit make her superior than man. Both leaders praised the role of women in their respective fields in the modern society. Both have given immense importance to women’s role both in family maintenance and society.

### **Conclusion.**

It is now clear that both the great leaders tried their level best to empower the ladies folk in both the countries. Women emancipation was a big threat before Indian independence and in Iranian society before the onset of Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979. Women were freed from the clutches of traditions and rituals in legal and political restrictions in both the countries. The status of women improved and empowered practically by these great leaders. Both the leaders stressed on women education, the upliftment of women is not possible without it. Women were mostly family victims and are exploited domestically in the society with social evils like dowry system, prostitution, witch hunting etc. were came out from the struggles of these leaders. Gandhiji highly critique of social evils, his consistent efforts for the liberation of women and his immense belief, faith in women’s moral strength made an impact on women’s struggle for rights and equality as an integral part of struggle for natural independence. It is the real fact that with the emancipation of women, the Iranian women courageously participated in the mass revolution of 1979, again during the war with Iraq. Both the leaders admitted that women should participate in every aspect of life as political, social, economic and cultural and should become independent. Both the leaders highlighted that both men and women are equal and should be given right

status, dignity and honour. Both leaders stressed that women should not be deprived of their fights and they should be given their rank, respect I family and society.

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