

Gandhian Approach on Swarojgar in Women Context: Past, Present and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to examine the Gandhian model of self-reliance (Swarojgar) and its power to influence change for women in the Indian socioeconomic environment. Based on self-employment through scattered, small businesses, Gandhi's strategy for rural economic independence revolved on Swarojgar, a fundamental concept. Particularly in helping women in rural regions, the study examines the historical impact of Gandhian concepts and their application in the present. It evaluates contemporary policy initiatives such as Atmanirbhar Bharat and Startup India in tandem with effective case studies to provide a complete picture of how Gandhi's ideas may be applied to solve current problems. At last, the report provides suggestions for policies using Swarojgar to boost women's economic power.

Keywords: *Gandhian Philosophy; Swarojgar; Women Empowerment; Rural Economy; Self-employment; Sustainable Development; Government Policies*

INTRODUCTION

Greater ideas of Swaraj, or self-rule drove Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Swaroj, or self-employment. Gandhi felt, particularly for underprivileged groups, full liberation required financial independence. With handicrafts and Khadi especially, his Swarojgar method put tremendous weight to local manufacture, self-sufficiency, and the expansion of village businesses. Gandhi saw a great part for women in this decentralised economic system, one which would let women gain financial freedom while preserving the social and cultural fabric of rural India.

Gandhian Approach to Swarojgar: A Historical Overview

Gandhi's focus on Swarojgar originated from his more expansive concept of Gram Swaraj, often known as village self-rule, which emphasized the self-sufficiency of the indigenous community. The conviction that India's fundamental strength rested in its villages and that women, as the guardians of the home economy, should play a major role in rural development was at the core of his worldview. He believed that women should play a role in rural development. Women were encouraged by Gandhi to engage in economic activities such as spinning khadi, farming, and handicrafts. These activities not only resulted in the generation of revenue, but they also restored dignity to the labor force and developed a sense of communal spirit.

Women's Role in the Freedom Movement:

A substantial number of women participated in the Swarojgar movement during the time of the Indian independence struggle. The manufacturing of khadi, which became a symbol of resistance against the economic exploitation of the British, was one of the activities that Gandhi encouraged women to take part in. Not only did this movement provide

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women with a way to achieve economic autonomy, but it also acted as a social awakening that questioned the conventional gender roles that had been established.

Post-Independence Developments:

In the years after India's independence, Gandhi's vision of Swarajgar continued to have an impact on the decisions that were made regarding policy, notably in the field of rural development. There were a number of programs that were developed by the government that were influenced by Gandhian ideology. One of these efforts was the Khadi and Village enterprises Commission (KVIC), which encouraged self-employment and small-scale enterprises. Nevertheless, in spite of these attempts, women's access to these possibilities was restricted as a result of the shift to a modern industrial economy and the establishment of patriarchal societal institutions.

PRESENT SCENARIO: SWAROJGAR AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Swarajgar is still a significant idea in modern India in tackling women's economic difficulties, particularly in underdeveloped rural areas. Different government initiatives and non-governmental groups (NGRs) are striving to bring back and maintain the Gandhian idea of self-employment.

Government Policies and Schemes:

Various governmental initiatives, such as the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Mahila E-Haat, and Mudra Yojana, are established to assist women entrepreneurs. These programs offer financial support, skill enhancement, and market access to women, promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship. The execution of these initiatives has encountered obstacles, such as insufficient awareness, poor infrastructure, and socio-cultural impediments.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Microfinance:

The emergence of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in India offers women a potent forum for participating in Swarajgar. Often assisted by microfinance organisations, SHGs help women to combine their resources and abilities to start small companies. Along with their economic situation, this has raised their social level, decision-making authority, and financial knowledge.

Digital and Technological Advancements:

The emergence of technology has generated novel opportunities for women in the self-employment sector. E-commerce platforms and digital marketplaces enable women to sell products online, thereby expanding their reach and overcoming traditional barriers to market access. The government's initiative to promote digital literacy and online platforms, such as Mahila E-Haat, has empowered women to utilize technology for self-sufficiency.

Challenges in the Path of Women's Swarajgar

Women still confront several obstacles in achieving the full potential of self-employment, despite tremendous advancements.

The main challenges consist of:

Deeply rooted gender norms and cultural limitations often inhibit women's capacity to participate in outside-of-home economic activity.

Lack of Access to Capital:

Particularly in rural regions with little banking infrastructure, women entrepreneurs typically struggle to get loans and financial help.

Education and Skill Gaps:

For many women, particularly those in rural areas, insufficient access to vocational training and education still remains a barrier.

Women-led businesses frequently find it difficult to reach larger markets, particularly in the lack of sufficient marketing, branding, and distribution systems.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:**Revitalizing the Gandhian Model for Women's Empowerment**

The creation of an economic structure that is more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable is the key to guaranteeing the future of Swarojgar for women. There are several approaches that may be taken to increase the number of women who engage in self-employment:

Policy Reforms and Incentives

Policies aimed at giving women more access to capital, education, and employment prospects should be strengthened by governments. More efficiency and oversight should be put into the implementation of customized programs that address the particular difficulties that women in both rural and urban regions confront.

Focus on Education and Skills Development

It is very important to put money into schooling, especially for women to learn vocational and internet skills. Women can find new customers and keep their businesses going with the help of programs that mix old-fashioned hobbies with new business skills.

Strengthening Self-Help Groups and Cooperatives

Giving SHGs and cooperatives better access to financing, training, and infrastructure helps them to be strengthened. For group bargaining, resource pooling, and creating community-based businesses, these organisations are quite effective.

Harnessing Technology and Innovation

Technological improvements must be used to open up new options for women in self-employment. Digital platforms, mobile banking, and e-commerce technologies may assist female entrepreneurs grow their firms and access worldwide markets.

Social and Cultural Reforms

Encouragement of Swarojgar among women should also concentrate on shifting society's perceptions of women's financial involvement. Changing gender stereotypes and motivating more women to choose self-employment can mostly depend on grassroots movements, media, and educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

Seen through the prism of women's empowerment, Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Swarojgar presents a timeless and sustainable blueprint for economic growth. Although self-employment has helped women make great progress toward empowerment, much more has to be done to remove the cultural and socioeconomic obstacles they encounter. Swarojgar may keep being extremely important in promoting economic independence, social equality, and sustainable livelihoods for women throughout India by going back over Gandhian ideas and customizing them to fit modern issues.

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