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**Aurora's Business School**  
Chikkadapally  
Hyderabad-500020, INDIA

# AURORA'S JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT

Jan-March, 2018



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# Connect to Talent for Competitive Advantage

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## 'Ignore talent, lose competencies'

### Abstract

*Effective talent management is an important prerequisite for survival and prosperity of companies in the volatile and intensely competitive business environment of today. Managing talent is a complex and demanding job with no readymade prescriptions and companies have to rise to the challenges with tailor made solutions. Poor talent management capabilities of organizations will handicap them from facing the market challenges. Companies with a firm grip on talent by way of employing advanced talent management practices will certainly establish themselves as market leaders in the present and evolving market. Aligning talent to the business strategy of the company will create a niche for them in the market. Ignoring talent will always be disastrous as it leads to loss of the competent and the reservoir of competencies. Companies which assiduously seek, nurture and reward talent will stand out as highly successful companies.*

### Key Words

Talent management, Alignment, Competency, Competitive differentiation, Strategy

### Introduction

A great place to work is one where employees exhibit, use and grow their talent. Organizations are made up of people. People create value through proven business processes including innovation, customer service, sales, and many other value adding activities. As an organization strives to meet its business goals, it must make sure that it has continuous and effective measures to manage (acquire, groom, assess, reward, utilize) talent. The ability of any organization to compete depends upon the performance of all its key talents, and its ability to develop and promote those talents. Understanding and evaluating the talent of the people is indispensable. To create sustainable long-term success an organization must first and fundamentally understand, relate and align its talent to the strategy. Many of the research studies confirmed that talent management leads to sustainable development and competitive advantage of the business. Further, when talent is linked to vision, mission, goals, values, and strategies of the company it will yield the best results for the company. In a competitive marketplace, talent management surely is a prime driver for organizational success.

Talent of the employees holds the key to efficiency, competitive differentiation and success for the economic growth of the company especially during times of economic downturn. At times of economic downturn only talent will stand. A company that does good work on managing talent has greater chances at creating difference than a company that neglects this important area. Managing talent is all about setting the foundation for understanding how to be successful in a market and how to be competitively different from others.

### What is Talent Management?

Talent management is all about managing the minds of the people. Minds are the most precious but

intangible resources comprising of knowledge, abilities, capabilities and skills. It is concerned with managing the ability, competency and power of employees within an organization. It is not restricted to recruiting the right candidate at the right time but it extends to exploring the hidden and unusual qualities of employees and developing and nurturing them to get the desired results. Hiring the best talent from the industry may be a big concern for the organizations today but retaining them and transforming them according to the culture of the organization and getting the best out of them is a much bigger concern. Talent management is concerned with sourcing talent, integrating and aligning talent, developing talent, engaging and rewarding talent, strategically deploying talent, and assuring there is an adequate talent pipeline to support the business as it moves toward its strategic goals (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

Thus, talent management in organizations is not just limited to attracting the best people from the industry but it is a continuous process involving sourcing, hiring, developing, retaining and promoting them while meeting the organization's requirements simultaneously. For instance, if an organization wants the best talent of its competitor to work with it, it needs to attract that person and offer him something that is far beyond his imagination to come and join and then stick to the organization. Only hiring him does not solve the purpose but getting the things done from him is the main task. Therefore, it can be said that talent management is a full-fledged process that not only controls the entry of an employee but also his or her exit.

We all know that people who take the organization to the next level. To achieve success in business, the most important thing is to recognize the talent that can accompany you in achieving your goal. Attracting them to work for you and strategically fitting them at a right place and among right people in your organization is the next step. It is to be remembered that placing a candidate at a wrong place or among wrong people can multiply your problems regardless of the qualifications, skills, abilities and competency of that person. However brilliant he or she may be, but placing that person at a wrong place defeats the very purpose of hiring that person. The process of talent management is incomplete if you are unable to fit the best talent of the industry at the place where he or she would be most useful.

Some organizations, especially those at the giving end (who loses their high-worth employees) may find the whole process very unethical. But in this cut-throat competition where survival is a big question mark, the whole concept sounds fair. Every organization requires the best talent to survive and brace ahead in competition. Talent is the most important factor that drives an organization and takes it to a higher level, and therefore, it cannot be compromised at all. It won't be exaggerating saying that talent management is a never-ending war for talent!

Talent management can be a discipline as big as the HR function itself or a small bunch of initiatives aimed at people and organization development. Different organizations utilize talent management for their benefit in many different ways. This is as per the size of the organization or their belief in the different practices of talent management. It could just include a simple interview of all employees conducted yearly, discussing their strengths and developmental needs. This could be utilized for mapping people against the future initiatives of the company and for succession planning.

### **Why Manage Talent?**

The benefits of talent management are many. They include, among others, the following.

**Right Person in the right Job:** Through a proper ascertainment of people skills and strengths, people related decisions gain a strategic agenda. The skill or competency mapping allows you to take stock of skill inventories lying with the organization. This is especially important both from the perspective of the organization as well as that of the employee because when the right person is deployed in the right position employee productivity is increased. Since there is a better alignment between an individual's interests and his job profile the job satisfaction also will be heightened.



**Retaining the top talent:** In spite of many changes in the global economy, attrition remains a major concern of business organisations. Retaining top talent is important to leadership and growth in the marketplace. Organisations that fail to retain their top talent are at the risk of losing out to competitors. The focus is now on charting employee retention programs and strategies to recruit, develop, retain and engage quality people. Employee growth in a career has to be taken care of. While succession planning is being performed those who are on the radar need to be kept in loop so that they know their performance is being rewarded.

**Better Hiring:** The quality of an organization depends on the quality of workforce it possesses. The best way to have talent at the top is to have talent at the bottom. No wonder then talent management programs, trainings and hiring assessments will become an integral aspect of HR processes nowadays.

**Understanding Employees Better:** Employee assessments give companies deep insights to the management about their employees, their development needs, career aspirations, strengths and weaknesses, abilities, likes and dislikes. It is easier therefore to determine what motivates whom and this helps a lot in Job enrichment process.

**Better professional development decisions:** When an organization gets to know who its high potential employee is, it becomes easier for it to invest in their professional development. Since development calls for investment decisions towards learning, training and development of the individual either for growth, succession planning, performance management etc, an organization bothering where to make this investment in talent management gets clarity.

### **Challenges of Talent Management**

Talent management is not an easy job to do. It needs loads of mental exercise from employers' side and if this happens the horizons of the competencies will increase, broaden and strengthen the important plans, priorities, change process, prime objectives and strategies of business. Technologies, products and strategies can be replicated, but it is people who enable a company to innovate, differentiate and succeed. The approach of the companies in managing the talent of their employees must lead to progress and retention of talent. Harnessing that human capital requires elevating employer's view of talent management to a more strategic level. The giant companies like PepsiCo and GE, which are incessantly investing in development, have come to be known as 'academy companies' or breeding grounds for talent simply by continuing some of the practices that nearly all corporations had followed, some time or the other in the past. A number of such companies had managed to ride out the restructurings of the 1980s with their programs intact only to succumb to cost-cutting pressures later on (Peter Capelli, 2008).

Attracting high-worth individuals from the competitors is not everyone's cup of tea. Targeting them and finally hiring them is the test of your competencies, experience, personal traits and brain application. This is where the strategic approach plays an important role. A full-fledged department of Talent Management (a part of HRD), especially dedicated to the purpose is required to recognize, source and poach them. However, the process doesn't finish here. It is a never-ending course of action that requires continuous effort.

According to Ernst & Young's (2010) business risk report, risks associated with talent management broke into the Top 10 last year to become the seventh most important risk occupying corporate leaders' minds. Talent management risk implies the danger of losing key competencies, including members of the leadership team that allow an organization to achieve its business goals.

Managing employee capital is a complex phenomenon but still it is very important for companies to continually invest in human capital and for this companies must have a better understanding of cultural differences, legislative and regulatory issues, demographic trends, labor laws, work-life balance imperatives, leadership compulsions, culture of the organization etcetera which vary from one

jurisdiction to another. No matter where they are headquartered, organizations have to recognize that they operate in a global marketplace and must adapt to the local practices and situations. This will help to exhibit, develop and sustain the talent. There could be many issues while handling the talent but most important one is that of culture difference although according to Ernst & Young report (2010) cultural quotient (CQ) is not yet a widely accepted concept.

In a competitive marketplace, talent management is a primary driver for organizational success. It is nearly unanimously felt that HR can and should add more value to corporations. The best way to do this is by being a business partner and thereby directly improving the performance of the business. A recent survey by Ernst & Young (Growing pains: Companies in rapid growth markets face talent challenges as they expand) found, wide economic and talent imbalances have amplified their usual talent management issues. A 2007 study from the Hackett Group found companies that excel at managing talent post earnings that are 15 percent higher than peers. For an average Fortune 500 company, such an improvement in performance means hundreds of millions of dollars (Teng, 2007). Companies which carry abundance of competencies must be on a regular spree of auditing their talent. Losing competencies is always about losing money.

Except a few large ones, internal talent auditing and development has been lacking in companies. Some business firms are failing to predict the economic downturns and uncertainties which are very much linked to talent management. Company's first priority in their agenda must be gaining and retaining the competencies which come from talent. A company can find and fix talent by auditing of existing talent. Auditing talent helps organizations understand their current state of affairs, forecast talent gaps, and take the necessary steps to close those gaps. Developing an effective talent management strategy is the first step to ensure that organization is competitive.

### **Why Talent Exits?**

One of the toughest challenges in the field of talent management is the regulation of talent exit. Many studies have time and again found that people leave because of their direct managers or supervisors more than for any other reason. Therefore, it is again the immediate manager or supervisor who can do more than anyone else to make employees happy and productive. Companies must have continuous watch on their manager's behavior towards their employees. Unhappy employee experience mushrooms like virus and becomes a wildfire. Happiness or unhappiness of employee must be taken due care of by his or her immediate manager. Happiness generates talent and unhappiness buries talent and multiplies occasions of talent exit.

**Retaining Talent:** Companies should take utmost care in selecting the right people as managers and supervisors because these people are going to directly manage the employees working under them. They should build robust cultures which encourage good relationships between managers, supervisors and people working with each other. A regular homely feedback by managers to their team members will certainly kindle scope for enhancing talent and making talent loyal to the company.

**Dearth of Great Managers:** According to Gallup study no matter how generous its pay, benefits or training, a company that lacks great supervisors and managers will suffer. Great managers, according to the Gallup research, have the following behaviors that set them apart from others:

- a] They select an employee for talent rather than for skills or experience.
- b] They set clear expectations and define the right outcomes rather than the right steps.
- c] They motivate people, by building on their strengths rather than trying to fix their weaknesses.
- d] As each employee grows, they encourage him or she to find the right fit for their strengths within the organization.

A more encompassing approach to managing talent is essentially to be proactive in managing the essentials of the employees. Companies must recreate a rational policy on managing talent and along with this must create awareness on talent and its benefits. The cost of losing talent and recruiting the talent is always costly.

### **Talent Management Strategy**

A talent management strategy prepares organizations for challenges like cultivating skill sets of current workforce, retaining highly talented employees from competitors and finding new talent from the market. Finding new talent has become a difficult task to HR people. A research study done by Accenture found that nearly 70 percent of college graduates in India do not have the technical and business skills to enter the white-collar workforce. A study by SHRM and others in late 2010 shows that even in the U.S only 32 percent of College graduates have “excellent” skills as they enter the working world and only 16 percent of high-school graduates have such skills (Daider Kenny, 2012). This kind of picture is really gloomy and indicative of extreme difficulty of finding talent from market. Organizations must therefore concentrate much on their existing talent.

**Timely Execution of Right Strategy for Competitive Differentiation:** Many existing and emerging multinationals are demonstrating their ability to surmount business challenges which make them world-class companies. However, they have ignored the importance of proper utilization of talent at their own cost. Effective talent management helps organizations outperform their competitors even when resources are tight. Ability to attract, develop and retain talent determines the strategic capability of organizations. Companies that could not attract, develop, retain and above all could not manage this effectively system fail to become strong performers. Organizations must see that talent management system must exist to support their mission and vision to eventually achieve success which in business essentially means healthy balance sheets. If talent is only about working skills it will be disruptive but if it includes life skills it will be constructive.

It's the job of top management to set the timely framework for building a great talent pool and architecting a right strategy to go to market that can allow the company to be successful in its target markets and achieve its revenue and profit over time. The conundrum is companies build great strategies but the executors of the strategy are ordinary but not extraordinary. When you build strategies you need extraordinary people to execute the same. Strategies with great and timely executors will definitely create competitive differentiation. A brilliant strategy, blockbuster product, or breakthrough technology can put you on the competitive map, but only solid execution can keep you there (Gray Neilson et al, 2008). People work hard to build great strategies but fail to create a difference in the market because of poor performers, executors and various other reasons but it is the organization's need to find out the reasons for poor execution. When the levels of engagement are low the levels of execution are certainly poor. Even people are good enough but when they lack execution skills or experience they cause a disaster. Sometimes simple things with great execution reap the harvest. Effective executions always prove to be competitive advantage. For this people who are involved in execution must be involved in framing strategies. Generally this does not happen and what happens is “leader frames, follower executes”, and “leader dreams, follower executes”.

**Aligning Talent with Strategy:** Companies seeking a competitive advantage in today's marketplace should view talent management as a process that connects a company and its strategy with its mission, vision and values, and the way it manages and develops its people. Talent management must be perceived as the highest level of corporate responsibility and the existing practices of the company must ensure that talent management processes align with corporate strategy so as to fit them together into a coherent whole. According to Ernst & Young's survey of Global organizations, close to two thirds of respondents (63%)

said that their talent management programs were aligned to support their companies' business strategies. The remainder (37%) said that their talent management programs were either not aligned or they did not get to know whether the programs were aligned. Current talent management programs should always be aligned to the business strategy and should continue to be proactively changed to suit changes in the vision of the company.

Generally employers forecast much on budgetary needs but not on talent and skill requirements that will be necessary to meet present and future business strategies.

### **Why Some Organizations Don't Benefit from Talent management?**

In spite of having large talent pool and the processes around to make things more efficient, some firms have not yet benefited from talent management. In practice, certain organizations restrain the talent of employees in the name of operational procedures, superiority complex and hierarchy. Such mind sets will hamper the growth of the business. Companies lose grip and sight of their main objectives and strategy they built and loose the drive and focus of a well designed corporate objectives and strategy because it is the talent which runs the show, which a company either lacks, underutilizes or does not utilize. The underutilization and non-utilization is a huge problem for all the companies. Companies recruit people and pay money to display talent, but there is no opportunity for employees to display the talent except on ordinary work, and when this happens employer is the loser and the loss is huge.

### **What is Needed?**

An organization a never achieve its full potential until it connects the talent of the company with its business strategy. Connecting the talent to business strategy will enhance the socio-economic value of organization and the return on investment. The collective skills of the talent employed in an organization largely comprise the organization's core capabilities. An organization's talent injects a degree of contextual ambiguity that is very difficult for competitors to benchmark and replicate. More than any other asset, talent provides the potential for long-term competitive advantage (Lawler, 2008). Shift in market realities is a known truth and companies must acknowledge this truth and must continuously refine their talent and talent management programs to face the emerging risks with prudence. Companies must clarify that talent management is its strategic priority and connectivity between strategy and talent should not be missed.

Companies need to align their talent to their emerging long-term needs as well. Research from the Hewitt Group illustrates that top global companies consistently apply their competency models across the organization, and their competencies are significantly more aligned with overall business strategies. Eighty-four percent of top global companies demonstrated alignment, compared to just 53 percent of other organizations (Gandossy, 2007). When developing business strategy it should be natural for the developers of the strategy to keep in mind the requisites of talent management, because it has become a biggest challenge for multinational companies to build and retain a strong talent pipeline.

Apart from following the traditional practices for talent management like recruiting, training, performance management, compensation, reward systems, retention etc companies must also focus on the following issues.

- 1) Talent alignment with strategy
- 2) Cultural consistency
- 3) Employee engagement
- 4) Leadership engagement
- 5) Work life balance, and
- 6) Employer and employee branding which has become order of the day.

In 1999, the Hay Group studied more than 500,000 employees in 300 companies and found that out of 50

different retention factors, the pay was the least important. Being with traditional practices is a consolation to the companies and relating itself to the changing times will benefit the companies. No organization can survive indefinitely by remaining the same. Employer /leaders must develop a talent mindset in the company and make sure this is part of their culture. More and more research, by companies like the Hackett Group, the Aberdeen Group, IBM, HCI and IDC, is showing the strong link between talent management processes and financial results. Truly successful organizations realize that the true sustainable competitive advantage they have is their people, and they use strategic talent management to maintain this advantage.

### Survey Findings

In the light of the above conceptual discussion we conducted a small survey on talent management in the IT industry. Now we take a look at our survey findings.

1. When asked about getting the feedback on their performance from their managers 47% of the respondents said that 'almost always', 27% felt 'sometimes' and 25% said they get it oftentimes. Though the rating is good but still a section of employees felt that they are cornered [see table-1].

**Table 1: Bose's Feedback on the Subordinates' Performance**

Parameter	Almost always	Often	Sometime	Almost Never
<b>My superior gives me regular feedback on how I am doing.</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>

1. Coming to employee engagement in IT industry\*\* 88% of respondent employees felt that their organization is indeed efficient in maintaining the talent or potential of all employees only 12% disagreed to this. Thus a vast majority of the employees felt that there is lot of respect in the organization for the talent and potential. [See table-2].

**Table-2: Organization's Efficiency in maintaining the Talent of all Employees**

Is your organization efficient in maintaining the Talent or Potential of all employees	Yes	
	Frequency	Percent
Provides career development / counseling services.	23	23%
Provides opportunities for promotion and internal career advancement.	49	49%
Employee well-being practices are good.	8	8%
Helps in pursuing education courses.	6	6%
There are no Career development / counseling services.	2	2%
No clarity in Opportunities for promotion and internal career advancement.	10	10%
Employee well-being practices are not enough.	2	2%

(The percentage exceeds 100 since the response categories allowed were more than one)

## **Principles of Talent Management**

There are certain principles of talent management that one should follow or keep in mind.

**1 - Avoid Mismatch Costs:** In planning for future manpower requirements, most HR professionals prepare a deep bench of candidates or manpower inventory. Many of the people who remain in this bracket start searching for other options and move when they are not raised to a certain position and profile. In such a scenario it is better to keep the bench strength low and hire from outside from time to time to fill gaps. This in no way means only to hire from outside, which leads to a skill deficit and affects the organizational culture.

Such decisions can be taken by thinking about the 'Make or Buy' decision. Perhaps questions like - How accurate is the demand forecast? How long is the talent required? Can we afford to develop? Factual answers to these questions can better help the talent management to decide on whether to develop or buy talent.

**2 - Reduce Risk of Being Wrong:** In manpower anticipations for future an organization can ill afford to be wrong. It is hard to forecast talent demands for future business needs because of the uncertainty involved. It is therefore very important to attune the career plans with the business plans. A 5 year career plan looks ridiculous along with a 2 year business plan. Further, long term development and succession plans may end up as a futile exercise if the organization lacks a firm retention strategy.

**3 - Recoup Talent Investments:** Developing talent internally pays in the longer run. Best way to recover investments made in talent management is to reduce upfront costs by finding alternative and cheaper talent delivery options. Organizations also require a rethink on their talent retention strategy to improve employee retention. Another way that has emerged of late in many organizations is sharing development costs with the employees. Many of TATA companies, for example, sponsor their employees' children education. Similarly lots of organizations use 'promote then develop' programs for their employees where the cost of training and development is shared between the two. One important way to recoup talent investments is spotting the talent early. More importantly the identified people need to be given opportunities before they get them elsewhere.

**4 - Balancing Employee Interests:** How much authority should the employees' have over their own development? There are different models that have been adopted by various corporations globally. There is 'the chess master model', but the flipside in this is that talented employees search for options. Organizations can also make use of the internal mobility programs which are a regular feature of almost all the top organizations. These principles are just broader guidelines; their application varies across industries and organizational cultures.

## **Talent Management Process**

Talent management is a never-ending process that starts from targeting people. The process regulates the

entry and exit of talented people in an organization. In order to understand the concept better, let us discuss the logical stages in talent management process:

**Understanding Requirements:** It is the preparatory stage and plays a crucial role in success of the whole process. The main objective here is to determine the requirement of talent. The main activities of this stage are developing job description and job specifications.

**Sourcing Talent:** The second stage of talent management process that involve targeting the best talent of the industry. Searching for people according to the requirement is the main activity here.

**Attracting Talent:** It is important to attract the talented people to work with the company as the whole process revolves around this only. After all the main aim of talent management process is to hire the best people from the industry.

**Recruiting Talent:** Actual process of hiring starts from here. This is the stage when people are invited to join the organization.

**Selecting Talent:** This involves meeting with different people having same or different qualifications and skill sets as mentioned in job description. Candidates who qualify this round are invited to join the organization.

**Training & Development:** After recruiting the best people, they are trained and developed to get the desired output.

**Retention:** Certainly, it is the major purpose of talent management process. Hiring alone does not serve the purpose completely. Retention depends on various factors such as pay package, job specification, challenges involved in a job, designation, personal development of an employee, recognition, culture and the fit between job and talent.

**Promotion:** No one can work in an organization at the same designation with same job responsibilities for long. Job enrichment plays an important role along with periodic promotions.

**Competency Mapping:** Assessing employees' skills, development, ability and competency is the next step. If required, also focus on behaviour, attitude, knowledge and future possibilities of improvement. It gives you a brief idea if the person is fit for promoting further.

**Performance Appraisal:** Measuring the actual performance of an employee is necessary to identify his or her true potential. It is to check whether the person can be loaded with extra responsibilities or not.

**Career Planning:** If the individual can handle the work pressure and extra responsibilities well, the management needs to plan his or her career so that he or she feels rewarded. It is good to recognize their efforts to retain them for a longer period of time by providing opportunities for their growth and development.

**Succession Planning:** Succession planning is all about who will replace whom in near future. The employee who has given his best to the organization and has been serving it for a very long time definitely deserves to hold the top position. Management needs to plan about when and how succession will take place.

**Exit Management:** The process ends when an individual gets retired or is no more a part of the organization.

### **Myths about Talent Management**

Without doubt talent management is a very useful concept for organizations but unfortunately many of them look upon the former as an overhead rather than a value creating process. This can be attributed to some flaws in the implementation and some myths among HR practitioners regarding the same. We shall try to unravel some of those myths and solutions to the same.

**Myth 1 - Paying higher compared to rival firms will stop the employee from leaving:** Offering more compensation than rivals or paying above the industry standard will prevent employees from leaving and in attracting the best talent.

**Reality:** Paying higher than rival firms may help to a certain extent in retaining your employees. It may also help you poach certain employees from your rivals but in the long run, money fails to motivate people. Money is a hygiene factor; its absence may be a de-motivating factor but presence surely cannot be motivating for long.

**Solution:** It is the day to day work, organizational culture and career progression that motivate people more on a daily basis. Analyze each employee on what motivates whom and try to align their career interests with their growth in the organization.

**Myth 2 - Rewards and Incentives only Motivate People:** The second myth is that it is rewards and incentives only that motivates people to give their hundred percent and work more productively. Consequently it's the rewards and incentives that is at the focus of HR people.

**Reality:** It is the attributes and the culture of the organization that is most likely to motivate people to work better and be happy with their jobs. Leadership and job empowerment are other factors that contribute to that happiness of employees.

**Solution:** Work on making the organization a better place in terms of enriching the culture, improving senior junior relationships and of course laying due emphasis on how the employees are being compensated.

**Myth 3 - Employee Engagement is Useless:** In industries where the attrition rate is low there is a



common feeling prevalent that employee engagement programs are of no benefit. Further there is also a feeling that employee engagement helps only the employees and not the organization.

**Reality:** There is no direct connection between levels of attrition and employee engagement. In fact employees who are engaged well are more productive and take ownership of their work. Since organizations comprise of people, their engagement not only improves employee performance but also organizational or corporate performance. According to one recent research engaged employees perform 22 percent better, have lesser rates of absenteeism, and produce greater customer satisfactions.

**Solution:** Customize engagement strategy for each employee and show the connection between employees work commitment and organizational success. Improve key drivers such as manager's expertise and future career opportunities and development.

**Myth 4 - Low Growth Periods do not require Employee Engagement:** Organizations typically believe that low growth is an industry wide phenomenon and does not demand employee engagement. Employees are naturally left with lesser options to switch jobs.

**Reality:** In the absence of employee engagement the organizations stands at the risk of losing projects in hand. Continued absence of employee engagement may in fact de-motivate an employee to contribute his best.

**Solution:** Employee engagement is critically required to retain and polish talent that is essential for future growth and opportunities.

### **Summing-up**

In today's increasingly challenging competitive global economy, companies need to manage talent even while pursuing new market opportunities. Growth will be driven by an organization's current talent pool. It is imperative for organizations to invest in developing employee skills and competencies and increase productivity and performance that will drive sustainable growth into the future. Organizations must regularly assess the existing levels of talent and understand key drivers to talent management. Employers must regularly engage with employees and this engagement gives employer understanding on key drivers to talent management. It is always proved that the financial value of companies often depends upon the quality of the talent they hire, develop and exist. Successful organizations have a deep understanding of their employees and their evolving needs.

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## Gandhiji's Contributions to Journalism

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“Freedom of press is a precious privilege that no country can forgo”

“The press is called the Fourth Estate. It is definitely a power, but to misuse that power is criminal”

“Newspapers today have almost replaced the Bible, the Koran and the Gita”

--Gandhi

### Abstract

*This article dilates on the views of Mahatma Gandhi on journalism and mass media, the role of journalists in society and his personal contributions to the field of journalism. He wrote to papers and journals and edited a few periodicals in consistence with what he preached. He wrote on many aspects of journalism such as the aim of journalism, canons of journalism, role of newspapers, responsibilities of a journalist, need for liberty of press and the ideals of journalism. The article also highlights the uniqueness and profoundness of Gandhiji's journalistic endeavours.*

### Key Words

Journal, Journalism, Edition, Portrait, Editorial, Advertorial, Investigative journalism, Media, Periodical

### Introduction

Gandhiji was a staunch believer in the power of the word. He wrote very extensively and cautiously for newspapers and journals with a view to mobilize public opinion in favour of several progressive causes that he took up. The subjects on which he chose to write were varied. His writings depict his simplicity, honesty, integrity and transparency that touch the hearts of the readers cutting across generations and even nations. As late M V Kamath has aptly pointed out, “...he wrote in a manner that anybody could understand. He was writing for everyman so that everyman could understand him easily. He had no literary pretensions but what he wrote was literature.”

### Role of Newspapers and Journals

Writing on the importance of journalism Gandhi wrote that the news and print media is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges the whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. Gandhiji said” “Newspapers today have almost replaced the Bible, the Koran, the Gita and the religious scriptures”. Gandhiji had also cautioned us against the evils of journalism by saying “For English voters their newspaper is their Bible. They take their cue from newspapers which are often dishonest. The same fact is differently interpreted by different newspapers, according to the party in whose interests they are edited. Our newspaper would consider a great Englishman to be a paragon of honesty, another would consider him dishonest. What must be the

condition of the people whose newspapers are of this type? ... These people change their views frequently. It is said that they change them every seven years. These views swing like the pendulum of a clock and are never steadfast. The people would follow a powerful orator or a man who gives those parties, receptions, etc”.

### **Caution against Misuse of Newspapers**

It will be pertinent to point out as to what Mahatma Gandhi cautioned against the misuse of newspapers. He said newspapers are meant primarily to educate the people by making them familiar with contemporary history. This is a work of no mean responsibility. It is a fact, however, that readers cannot always trust newspapers. Often facts are found to be quite the opposite of what has been reported. If newspapers realized that it was their duty to educate the people, they could not but wait to check a report before publishing it. It is true that often they have to work under difficult conditions. They have to sift the true from the false in a short time and can only guess at the truth. He said it would be better not to publish a report at all if it has not been found possible to verify it.

He further said that it is wrong to use a newspaper as a means of earning a living. There are certain spheres of work which are of such consequence and have such bearing on public welfare that to undertake them for earning one's livelihood will defeat the primary aim behind them. If a newspaper is treated as a means of making profits, the result is likely to be serious malpractices. It is not necessary to prove to those who have some experience of journalism that such malpractices do prevail on a large scale.

The eminent journalist and freedom fighter late Sainen Chatterjee had covered Mahatma Gandhi and his actions and programmes for a number of years. In an article, 'Reporting Mahatma', he had written for the special issue of Vidura on, Gandhi as a Journalist, (Jan-March, 1998) he said: "I joined journalism in 1942. Reporting Mahatma Gandhi and my tours with him were the best and most memorable period of my journalistic career. Gandhi himself was a journalist. During my tours with him, he often told me how he worked day and night to produce his journal 'Indian Opinion' in Natal, South Africa. He described 'Indian Opinion' as the most useful weapon in his struggle in South Africa. He always stressed the importance of newspapers in educating the people. Gandhi always believed and always emphasized that the sole aim of journalism should be service, service of the people and the country”.

### **Code of Ethics for Journalists**

In 'Young India' Gandhi once gave a glimpse of the exacting code he had set up for himself. "To be true to my faith, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics and my vocabulary. It is training for me. It enables me to peek into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds."

Gandhiji said that he had taken up journalism not for its own sake but merely as an aid to what he conceived to be his mission in life of teaching by example and precept. In his journalistic forays he acted true to his faith. He did not write in anger or malice or idly.

## Responsibility of Journalists

Writing in the Gujarati edition of the Indian Opinion of April 23, 1919 he raised the question. What should an editor do when something he or she has published displeases the government or is held to violate some law but is none the less true? Should he apologize? We should say, certainly not. Gandhi answering these questions said; "True, he is not bound to publish in such matter, but once it has been published, the editor ought to accept responsibility for it". Defending the journalists for their innocuous faults he said; "The editor of a daily newspaper, when he begins writing his leading article, does not weigh his words in golden scales. He may be betrayed into a hasty word. Must he pay for it even though he did it obviously in good faith without malice and in the public interest? These libel actions (which the British were taking against freedom Fighters) are calculated to demoralize Indian Journalism and make public criticism over-cautious and timid. I am no lover of irresponsible or unjustifiably strong criticism. But the caution to be beneficial must come from within and not superimposed from without".

According to Gandhi the true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock the public mind with wanted and unwanted impressions. A journalist has, therefore, to use his discretion, as to what to report and when. As it is, the journalists are not content to stick to the facts alone. Journalism has become the art of intelligent anticipation of facts. Therefore the journalist should have ability to anticipate developments so that he or she will be having lead time to report accurately and meaningfully.

## Journalistic Engagements

Initially after taking up the issues of Indians settled in South Africa he used friendly newspapers as a forum to express his views through letters to local dailies and through interviews that appeared subsequently in the newspapers. But later he came to the view that a struggle which chiefly relies upon internal strength cannot be wholly carried on without a newspaper. This view led him into his journalistic sojourns.

Gandhi was formally associated with six journals viz., Indian Opinion, Young India, Navjivan, Harijan, Harijanbandhu and Harijansevak. He was also the editor of three of these English weeklies, namely Indian Opinion (in South Africa during 1903-1915), Young India (1919- 1931), and Harijan (1933-1942 and 1946-January 1948). Gandhi not only wrote but gave interviews to other newspapers also. He mainly focused on open letters and letters to editor. All these journals which he described as "views papers" were organs of political and social movements which discussed with intensity and concentration the problems that demanded immediate action.

**The Indian Opinion:** His first paper, a weekly titled 'Indian Opinion' was started in South Africa in June, 1903 to ventilate the grievances of Indians settled in South Africa and mobilize public opinion in their favour. The Indian Opinion was bi-lingual that was published in English and Gujarati. For some time it had also Hindi and Tamil sections. Thus, it appeared in four languages for some time. It was printed at the farm, where Indian settlers in South Africa learnt all aspects of press-work, and hand power was preferred to mechanical power. The 'Indian Opinion' became for him training in self restraint, and for his friends a medium through which to keep in touch with his thoughts. In fact the tone of 'Indian Opinion' compelled the critic to put a curb on his own pen. As he put it in his autobiography: "For me it became a means for study of human nature in all its casts and shades....It made me thoroughly understand the responsibility of a journalist".

Gandhiji had devoted to the continuance of Indian Opinion and the establishment of Phoenix all his earnings during his last stay in South Africa that is nearly 5000 pounds as mentioned in his letter to the veteran freedom fighter Gopalakrishna Gokhale written on 25th April 1909.

Indian Opinion was a powerful weapon in the armory of passive resistance and was known as the only recorder of accurately sifted facts about Indians in South Africa and of Passive Resistance Movement. How important this journal was to Gandhi is seen from his own statement in his biography, *My Experiments with Truth*: "Indian Opinion... was a part of my life. Week after week I poured out my soul in its columns and expounded the principles and practice of satyagraha as I understood it. During 10 years, that is until 1914, excepting the intervals of my enforced rest in prison there was hardly an issue of 'Indian Opinion' without an article from me. I cannot recall a word in these articles set down without thought or deliberation or word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed the journal became for me training in self restraint and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts."

It not only served the purpose of a weekly newsletter which disseminated the news of the week among the Indian community but it became an important instrument of education. Through the columns of the newspaper Gandhi tried to educate the readers about sanitation, self-discipline and good citizenship.

He wished that the readers of the Indian Opinion will read biographies of great men and women of the world and follow them in practice. He had even suggested earlier, that each one of its subscribers should maintain a file on Indian Opinion. The Indian Opinion was not a commercial concern, but was an indication of the capacity of Gandhiji and his followers for the service of the community. In fact it proved highly useful in educating the local Indian community and in keeping Indians all over the world in touch with the course of events in South Africa. Indian Opinion, in a significant way also laid the foundations for Gandhi's contributions to Journalism after his return to India in 1915 to take up the larger cause of Indian Independence.

**Other Periodicals:** In 1933 Gandhi started three other periodicals viz., 'Harijan', 'Harijanbandhu', 'Harijansevak' in English, Gujarati and Hindi languages, respectively. These newspapers were the vehicles of his crusade against untouchability and poverty in rural areas. These papers published no advertisements even then they enjoyed wide circulation. His note of defiance and sacrifice gave a new stimulus to the evolution of press as a weapon of satyagraha. 'Young India' and 'Harijan' became powerful vehicles of his views on all subjects.

### **His Style of Writings**

He wrote on all subjects. He wrote simply and clearly but forcefully, with passion and burning indignation. One of the objects of a newspaper, he said, is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments, and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects. The 'Young India' and 'Navjivan' were used by him to ventilate his views and to educate the public on Satyagraha. He learnt in South Africa how important the press and public opinion could be in politics and had taught him-self how to use the written word most effectively.

Gandhiji's journals carried articles on a variety of subjects written by him and others ranging from the spinning-wheel to the most important political problem of the day. But writings on one subject were conspicuous by their absence throughout viz. art and aesthetics. Even so, the author reports that "Gandhiji tried his hand on intellectual and aesthetic subjects as well", and as an example refers to the extract of an

article on "Indian art" published in the issue of the Indian Opinion dated Sept. 17, 1903. However, this only exception is not written by Gandhiji but turns out to be a lengthy quotation on Indian art, the palace architecture, mosques and mausoleums of Agra and Delhi and several older Hindu temples of Southern India written by the late Sir William Hunter in his book Indian Empire, which Gandhiji reproduced in his article "for the edification of our South African readers, both European and Indian" and to drive home the fact that "India, as is often believed in South Africa, is not a place dotted merely with huts inhabited by savages." Years later in India in an interview to G. Ramachandran, Gandhiji admitted that "I do not speak or write about art because I am conscious of my own limitations. That consciousness is my only strength... My functions are different from the artist's and I shall not go out of my way to assume his position." Gandhiji even quipped during that interview that "neither Jesus nor Mohammed wrote on art!" (Young India, 13-11-1924 and 20-11-1924).

Gandhi believed in healthy journalism and avoided poisonous communication. He said "My writings cannot be poisonous. They must be free from anger, for it is my special religious conviction that we cannot truly attain our goal by promoting ill-will against the rulers or anyone else. My writings cannot but be free from hatred towards any individual because it is my firm belief that it is love that sustains the earth.

Gandhiji has written extensively and on a wide range of subjects such as politics, economics, society, health, culture, education, peace, industry and so on. His numerous writings, speeches and letters are published in the form 98 volumes. Besides he also authored three books viz.,

1. An Autobiography: A Story of My Experiments with Truth
2. Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule
3. Key to Health

Further, hundreds of books and thousands of articles are also published on him by people from all over the world.

### **Journalism sans Advertising**

Gandhiji felt that the practice of publishing advertisements should be discontinued. Initially he believed that advertisements were a good thing to have but on reflection he came round to the view that the practice is wholly undesirable since he felt advertisements are inserted by people who are impatient to get rich, in order that they may gain over their rivals and every kind of advertisement published was paid for. He saw this as one of the sorriest features of modern civilization that needs to be got rid of it. However he was not against publishing non-commercial advertisements, which serve a public purpose, free of charge.

The papers published by Gandhi did not carry advertisements. Despite this they had enjoyed wide circulation. His approach to journalism was totally devoid of ambitions. To him it was not a vocation to earn his livelihood; it was a means to serve the public. In the 'Young India' of 2 July 1925, he wrote: "I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and present under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of satyagraha which is a direct corollary of nonviolence."

On receiving advertisement support for running a newspaper Mahatma Gandhi wrote: It is now an established practice with newspapers to depend for revenues mainly on advertisements rather than on subscriptions. The result has been deplorable. The very newspaper which writes against the drink evil publishes advertisements in praise of drinks. In the same issue, we read of the harmful effects of tobacco as also from where to buy it. Or we shall find the same issue of a paper carrying a long advertisement for a

certain play and denouncing that play as well. Medical advertisements are the largest source of revenue though they have done, and are still doing incalculable harm to the people. This practice has come entirely from the West. No matter at what cost or effort we must put an end to this undesirable practice or at least reform. It is the duty of every newspaper to exercise some restraint in the matter of advertisements.

### **Aim of Journalism**

The true function of journalism, Gandhi said, is to educate the public mind, not to stock it with wanted and unwanted impressions. Today, when there is widespread concern over the growing influence of market forces on media, and regret over journalism being no longer a social service, Gandhi's views on values of journalism bring to bear on the profession of journalism the force of ethics and morality. In this context he had said, 'It is often observed that newspapers published any matter that they have, just to fill in space. The reason is that most newspapers have their eyes on profits... There are newspapers in the west which are so full of trash that it will be a sin even to touch them. At times, they produce bitterness and strife even between different families and communities. Thus, newspapers cannot escape criticism merely because they serve the people.'

Mahatma Gandhi's speech during his visit to 'The Hindu' sums up his philosophy and vision of journalism thus: "I have, therefore, never been tired of reiterating to journalists whom I know that journalism should never be prostituted for selfish ends or for the sake of merely earning a livelihood or, worse still, for amassing money. Journalism, to be useful and serviceable to the country, will take its definite, its best for the service of the country and, whatever happens the views of the country irrespective of consequences. I think that we have in our midst the making of newspapers which can do so". He further said that the newspapers should be read for the study of facts. They should not be allowed to kill the habit of independent thinking.

On obscene literature, about which, there is currently a debate and legal tussle, Gandhi was clear. When such literature is disseminated through newspapers of good standing and under the guise of art or service, it is truly horrible.

### **Canons of Journalism**

Gandhi had frequently written on various aspects of journalism. To him editorial independence, adherence to truth and self-restraints were the three overriding considerations for journalism. In his message for the editor of the newspaper, 'The Independence', on 30 January 1919, he wrote: In wishing you success in your new enterprise, I would like to say how I hope your writings would be worthy of the title you have chosen for your journal; and may I further hope that to a robust of independence you will add an equal measure of self-restraint and the strictest adherence to truth? Too often in our journals as in others do we get fiction instead of fact and declamation in place of sober reasoning? You would make 'The Independence' a power in the land and a means of education for the people by avoiding the errors I have drawn attention to.

Gandhi had elsewhere mentioned about the basic tenets of true journalism thus: "Journalism to be useful and serviceable to the country will take its definite place only when it becomes unselfish and when it devotes its best for the service of the country, and whatever happens to the editors or to the journal itself, editors would express the views of the country irrespective of consequences.



Extolling the qualities and expectations of an editor he was clear that even when a newspaper writes something that displeases the government, which is nonetheless true, the editor should not apologize. He was categorical in stating that if a newspaper were to run into difficulties as a consequence of publishing truth it should rather close down than buckle. This he felt was a better service to the public.

## **Conclusion**

Today, when the contemporary media scenario bristles with unheard of turmoil- investigative journalism-through all means fair and foul; over-riding role of market forces in the media wherein the "advertorial" and "response" and "response features" edge out editorials, and when the media is trying to project the celebrities and models as the icons of modern society, it would be worthwhile to revisit Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and canons of journalism and his eloquent contribution as a journalist.

According to late Chalapathi Rao, he was an eminent editor; Gandhi was probably the greatest journalist of all time. The periodicals he ran and edited were probably the greatest weeklies the world has ever known in terms of journalistic ethics. He published no advertisement; at the same time he did not want his newspapers to run at a loss.

Apart from being a national leader and social reformer, Gandhi was a great communicator. He was one individual who formulated and practiced what Journalism should be about to realise certain objectives. If there was any running theme in the writings of Gandhi it was the insistence on truth and non-violence, on fairness to all and the concern for public good.

Two months after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, his English weekly Harijan wrote in its editorial: "All work, in whatsoever sphere, was a means primarily of service in Gandhiji's eyes. Newspapers and journals can build up a fitting memorial to him in this matter by conforming or trying to conform to the unimpeachable standards of journalism practiced by our revered and beloved leader."

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# Gandhiji's Thoughts and Contributions to Women's Uplift

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## Abstract

*This article examines the importance and relevance of Gandhiji's views on issues that directly or indirectly impact the status of women in India. The issues that attracted his particular attention were gender equality, marriage system, purdah, dowry system, widow remarriage, divorce, women's honour, education of women, birth control, and sterilization. We discuss these and a few other related issues briefly after knowing the influences on Gandhiji that had shaped his thinking on women related matters. The views expressed and the actions undertaken by him may not go well entirely with the current times but the honesty of the Mahatma, the love and respect he had for women can never be doubted and the uniqueness of his views. He was an astute politician, a strategist and the Mahatma at the same time.*

## Key Words

Feminism, Strategy, Passive resistance, Purdah, Satyagraha, Feminisation, Smriti, Swayamvar, Satyagraha, Poligamy, Sati

## Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was different from most other freedom fighters and reformers that the world history had known. He had played the twin roles of a freedom fighter and a social reformer simultaneously. His effort was to realize an independent India and a reconstructed India where there is gender justice, equality of castes, communities and religions and dignity of all men and women. It was in this context that he had expressed his views and wrote on numerous issues that concerned the status and development of women in the Indian society. He sought to bring about a revolutionary change in the status of women in the first half of the 20th century.

The women related issues that attracted his particular attention were equality of sexes, marriage system, purdah, dowry system, widow remarriage, divorce, and women's honour, education of women, birth control, and sterilization. We discuss these and a few others related issues briefly after knowing something about the influences that shaped his thinking on matters relating to status and problems of women in India.

## Influences on his thinking on women:

Gandhi's unconscious guide in shaping his attitude to women was his mother, Putlibai, whom he deeply revered for her 'saintliness'. His intellectual guide was the image of the ideal wife of Hindu literature, whom he describes as ardhagana (one half of the body), the better half, and sahadharmacharini (the constant companion). Gandhi had acknowledged that he learnt the technique of non-violent passive resistance from women, his wife and mother. It was his wife Kasturba's passive resistance against

Gandhi's, as a man and husband, unreasonable actions and attitudes, that compelled him to change himself from a domineering to an understanding husband realizing the spirit of equality based upon the principle of mutual consideration.

Interestingly, his perception of women as instruments of social change was also influenced by two rather 'sexist' assumptions, which nevertheless did not have a negative impact on his thinking. One of these was the conservative and non-violent temperament that he assumed the women to possess. Two, women were perceived as slow to give up traditions and customs because of their generally conservative nature. He believed that women do discriminate better than men between the good and the bad.

### **Cotextualising Gandhi's Views**

To understand the role Gandhi had played in bettering women's status in the society, it is essential to look at their status in pre-Independent India. When Gandhi had emerged on to the political scene of India, social evils like child marriage and dowry were rampant. Indian women had an average life span of only twenty seven years. Death of women in labor was all too common. Patriarchal nature of the society confined women to the status of an inferior sex subjugated to their male counterparts. The purdah system, that compelled women to cover their faces, was in full vogue in Northern India and in pockets of South where Muslims ruled. Unless accompanied by their male guardians, women in general and upper caste women in particular were not permitted to venture out on their own. Only a very small number of women could avail of education. Percentage of women with basic education was as low as two percent. Both babies and pregnant women ran a high risk of dying young. Child marriages were too very common. Widows were in high numbers due to taboo of widow remarriage as well as older men marrying young girls, sometimes even of their daughter's age.

It was in such a dismal milieu that Gandhi took the responsibility of launching a social crusade that led to a major reorientation of the notion of women in the Indian society. Gandhi had both recognized and attempted to end the terrible suffering of Indian women. He exhorted women to step out of their homes and to participate in the protests by his use of satyagraha philosophy, which resulted in several women leading their own movements. The harmful treatment of Indian women was largely due to societal and religious customs that subordinated women and made them inferior to man.

### **Gandhi's Perception of Women**

There was a marked difference between Gandhi's perception of women and the perceptions of other reformers. The stance taken by other social reformers and leaders created a helpless image of the Indian women. With Gandhi, a new conception of women gradually gained currency. For Gandhi, women were not mere toys in the hands of men, nor were they their competitors. Men and women are essentially endowed with the same spirit and therefore have similar problems. Women are at par with men, one complementing the other.

**Expunging blemishes in shastras:** Gandhiji had referred to some blemishes in Manusmriti in Chapter IX of its text that deals with the Eternal Laws for Husband and Wife. There are hundreds of verses in this Chapter describing women in very derogatory words. He said that a great part of this body of laws are hateful and deserve to be condemned and not merely expunged. This apart, legislation or setting up moral

codes for social behaviour has been mostly done by men and has not always been fair to women. Women should therefore work for their removal.

**Women are not the weaker sex:** Gandhi never considered women as weaker sex. On the contrary he believed they are embodiments of virtues like knowledge, humility, tolerance, sacrifice and faith. These qualities of womenfolk are important hallmarks of a developed society. Even more importantly they were essential prerequisites for imbibing the virtue of satyagraha (righteous anger) that became the chief weapon to advance Gandhi's political and social agenda. Ability of enduring endless suffering can be witnessed only in the women, according to the Mahatma. Doctrine of ahimsa (non-violence) as preached by Gandhi incorporates the virtue of suffering as evident in the women. Therefore, Gandhi envisaged a critical role for women in establishing non-violence. He invoked the instances of ancient Indian female role models like Draupadi, Savitri, Sita and Damayanti, who epitomised Indian womanhood, to show that Indian women are not feeble. Gandhi asserted that women have equal mental abilities as that of men and an equally justified right to freedom. Gandhi summed up his stance on this theme thus "The wife is not the husband's slave but his companion and his help-mate and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows - as free as the husband to choose her own path."

**Women's rights on their own body:** Another great contribution of Gandhi in this regard is that he very vehemently stood for the rights of women over their own body, which the feminists in India of today have been crusading for lately. Men do not have a right to violate a woman. He even exhorted women to resist advances of their husbands in marriage and to not succumb to their carnal desires. The modern women's movement has been raising the voice that marriage does not legitimize rape in marital life. Gandhi took this stance long back and asserted a woman's inalienable right over her own body and marriage should not and cannot take away that right from her.

### **Women's Education**

Gandhi firmly believed that lack of education was the root cause of all evils against women. He believed that education is therefore necessary for women as it is necessary for men. Education was needed to ensure their moral development and to make them capable of occupying the same platform as that of men. He also believed that education is essential for enabling women to assert their natural rights, to exercise them wisely and to work for their expansion. He thought that low level of literacy among women had deprived them of socio-political power as also the power of knowledge. He thought that after receiving education they become sensitive to the glaring inequalities to which they are subjected to all along history.

The suggestion by Gandhi to educate young women was made early in the nineteenth century to eliminate practices that subordinated women. The education of women was poor at the time of Gandhi, and this was because of their low status in society. As the nationalist movement gathered strength, around 1930's, attention began to be directed toward the education of the crowd. In 1933, Gandhi organized a conference which came to be known as the Wardha scheme, a system of basic education for India. Gandhi emphasized that men's and women's education should differ. Girl's basic education was to concentrate on domestic courses. This idea is one that does not necessarily contribute to equality. Gandhi did want women to achieve equality, however; he still believed that women had a different role. Once women became educated they would no longer put up with "glaring inequalities to which they are subjected". Gandhi's stress on the importance of education had its own influence on securing a constitutional guarantee to

establish free and compulsory education for all children. Gandhi's insightful observations on Indian women have initiated substantial changes to their lifestyle and status in society due to his encouragement of education.

### **Complementarity of Men and Women**

Gandhi's views on women's role are based on family ideals. Gandhi felt that men and women are complementary to each other. Where in men supreme in the outward activities and therefore he should have a greater knowledge thereof. Home life is entirely the sphere of woman. Therefore in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children women ought to have more knowledge. He opined that unless courses of instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation of these basic principles, the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed. He assumed that man is supreme in the extra-mural activities and that woman is supreme in intra-mural activities. Education imparted to both men and women should be according to their pre-ordained stations in life.

Gandhi visualized a fundamental role for women as instruments of social change because they constituted the primary influence on the future citizens of the country and half the nation's strength in terms of population. He was of the opinion that women were out and out superior to men in their moral and spiritual strength and possess greater powers of self-sacrifice and suffering. He was of the view that women have been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. Rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation rather than by male domination. Lamenting that women have been taught to regard themselves as slaves of men he advised women to realize their full status and play their part as equals of men.

Gandhi was against gender bias in the training of children. He asserted that girls ought not to be taught to adorn themselves as that identified them as objects of desire without any other distinct human qualities. The latter had to be highlighted if they wished to be accepted as equal partners of men. He was also of the opinion that housework must be divided equally between boys and girls as the home belonged to both. Also, both boys and girls ought to have vocational training in some occupation so as to assure them a future livelihood when the need arose. Women are gifted with equal mental capacities and therefore she has equal rights.

In Gandhi's opinion women have a key role to play in the family and that the family was the crucible of society where future citizens, leaders and law givers were nurtured. Hence, it was here that a mother could mould the values and traits of her children in a direction that could lead to social progress. The ultimate aim was to teach children to be self-reliant and not to keep them dependent on the family resources.

### **Feminisation of the Freedom Movement**

According to Gandhi, the role of women in the political, economic and social emancipation of the country was of overriding importance. He had immense faith in the capability of women to carry on a non-violent crusade. Under his guidance and leadership, women indeed shouldered critical responsibilities in India's struggle for freedom. They held public meetings, organized picketing of shops, protested against selling foreign alcohol and articles, sold Khadi and actively participated in several other fronts of the national movement. They bravely faced the baton of the police and even went to jails.

Gandhi's call to women to join India's struggle for independence instrumental in transforming the outlook

of women. His tirade for Swaraj uprooted age old taboos and restrictive customs. Through their participation in the struggle for freedom, women of India broke down the shackles of oppression that had relegated them to a secondary position from time immemorial. Gandhi based his programme of action relating to Satyagraha not on traditional political methods. Its source was those virtues that would be suitable for women. Gandhi had admitted that he had designed his strategy and chosen his particular forms of struggle very consciously and deliberately, so as to encourage women's participation in them. He wrote: "My contribution to the great problem (of women's role in society) lies in my presenting the acceptance of truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this, woman will be the unquestioned leader and having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex."

Indeed Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence created favourable conditions for mass participation of women in all the movements he had launched. Instead of hiding in fear, as they usually did when the movements were violent. Women came out into the open from home in large numbers. The satyagraha made women feel that because of their femininity they are not inadequate or inferior to men. Their femininity has not been down-graded because of their propensity to face violence is considered less, but rather they were. Gandhi made women to feel that as women they are strong precisely because of their feminine character. Gandhi saw woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering and felt her advent to public life would result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and in accumulation of property in a few hands.

### **Fight for Women Related Causes**

Gandhiji had fought on several women related issues. He felt that for dealing with issues, such as child marriage, dowry, sati, purdah and prostitution particularly affecting women there was a need to change certain deep rooted values in society. He felt that dedicated women would have to approach men and launch a widespread campaign to arouse public opinion against these social evils. Victims of prostitution should be sought out and given opportunities for rehabilitation. He felt that this was a work of massive dimensions, but had to be undertaken if women were to take their rightful place in the society.

Gandhi squarely attacked scriptures, social customs and conventions that had devalued women's status. He had strongly upheld women's social, political and legal equality. He felt that they could play a most dynamic role in society by acting as mainsprings of revolutionary thought and action.

**Women's empowerment:** Gandhi had raised a few fundamental questions relating to women's empowerment. Following from the biological differences, can woman be psychologically different from man? Can women be cerebrally inferior to man? He had said "I am sure that the answer would be clear 'No'. Yet, differential conditioning over many a millennia have contributed to the perception that both men and women are different, both psychologically and cerebrally. Religion, customs and laws from times immemorial had relegated women to the backyards of human civilization. When you fear the power of the other and when you have no means to equal the other, you connive and lay traps for the subjugation of the other. This is what the history of hitherto existing man's civilization has done to women".

**Role in Politics:** Gandhi envisaged an important political role for women on the foundations of an equitable and non-violent social order. He wanted women to view their families in the larger perspective as parts of the global human family and to transfer some of their concern and devotion to the wider society. They must realize, he said, that as a class, women had been suppressed for centuries and it was now time for

them to rise in rebellion against their and prove their intrinsic worth.

With the backing of education and the discriminating use of the political rights, they could influence the process of decision-making and initiate appropriate changes at all levels to promote the values of social and economic equality. According to him though laws by themselves do not have much meaning, they were very important for setting norms so much so that politically and socially conscious women should agitate for the framing of legislation according them equal status in society. Simultaneously, strong and continuous agitation through the media and other platforms was necessary to rouse public opinion, which was the best sanction of law.

From the very beginning of his public career in India after returning from South Africa, Gandhiji made strongly worded appeals to women to join the national struggle in large numbers. The response to this was over whelming. In the non-cooperation campaign of 1920-22 women's contribution to the satyagraha fund in terms of personal jewelery was phenomenal. Women had also played a notable part in the propagation of khadi in defiance of government orders, and in picketing liquor shops as part of the temperance campaign.

In his plan for promoting communal harmony, eradicating untouchability and popularizing his revolutionary scheme of Basic Education, Gandhi held that women could play a positive and leading role as they had creative powers and an unlimited capacity for self-sacrifice.

**Economic independence:** He was not against economic independence of women. Some people feared that economic independence of women may lead to spread of immorality among them and disrupt domestic life. To that his answer was that morality should not depend upon the helplessness of a man or a woman. It should be rooted in the purity of hearts. He wanted women to take up some gainful work so as to supplement family earnings. He recommended works like spinning which will not disturb the home as he regarded their duties at home to be as important as men's duty to earn. He recommended equal payment to women. He realised that property laws in British India were against women. He asserted that married women are co-sharers in their husband's power and privileges in spite of the law being against them. He also emphasized on character and education as the real property that parents can transmit equally to their children.

**Women as equal to men:** He believed that men and women are equal as the same atma or soul dwells in the body of men and women. Since soul is sexless men and women are perfectly equal in the eyes of God. He recommended equal remuneration for women as he believed that women have equal mental capacities; have the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of men; and have same right to freedom and liberty as men.

Gandhi considered women not only equal to men but in many ways even superior. To him bravery lay in dying and not killing. He defined bravery in the highest sense of suffering and sacrifice. Hence to him the courage of self sacrificing women was superior to the men of brute force. He declared that to call women weaker sex was libel and a gross injustice to women. He believed that strength means moral power in which hence women are immeasurably superior to men. Even as a general rule he considered that the standards observed by women in their conduct were superior to those of men. He therefore advised the later to copy the former and not vice versa.

He believed that as both men and women are necessary for the world as well as for family. Therefore he advised the parents to treat their sons and daughters as equal and rejoice at the birth of both. He wanted

every husband to treat his wife as an 'ardhangini' and 'sahadharmini'. The wife is a comrade with same freedom which the husband sees for himself. She should have the right to participate in the very minutest details in the activities of men.

He asked women to cease to consider themselves the object of men's lust and should stop adoring themselves to please their husbands and others. He believed it will save women from subordination of men and wives would be saved from beating by their husbands. He thought jewellery to be a source of subordination as well as intimidation. He believed that women of India had strength, ability, character and determination to stand on her own and work shoulder to shoulder with men in every walk of life.

**Women in political arena:** He did not want women to be restricted from any activity and went on to say that there may be no legal bar against a woman hunting or wielding a lance. He pleaded for universal adult franchise with full voting rights to women. He called upon women to join Indian National Congress and participate in the freedom struggle. Women participated in political meetings and protest marches; bore cane charge; courted arrest and even got shot. They could do so because Gandhi chose a particular form of struggle which suited women well. He mobilized women politically through his speeches, writings and personal example. Due to him women participation in freedom movement and the presence of women in public sphere gained acceptability in India. It was made possible because men folk knew that the honour of their women was safe in a non violent struggle guided by Gandhi.

Women were also at the forefront of constructive programme. They organised themselves; manufactured contraband salt; sold it from house to house; picketed wine, ganja, opium, toddy and foreign goods shops; spun and wore khadi; participated in prabhat bheries, demonstrations, prayers, meetings, marches; worked for Hindu-Muslim unity; and for removal of untouchability. They also provided support to families when men were away.

**Ending of Child Marriages:** Gandhi was a strident critique of the custom of child marriages. He viewed child marriage as a source of physical degeneration as much as a moral evil. He was opposed to child marriages since they were devoid of the element of consent on the part of the concerned boy as well as the girl. He believed that both the boy and the girl should be developed physically and mentally at the time of marriage so that they have a voice in the choice of their life partner. He looked at the practice of child marriage both as a moral and physical evil. Child marriages made innocent girls the objects of men's lust; ruined the health of many a child mother and converted tender age girls into widows. He also believed that the practice of child marriage came in the way of the progress of women since they were married off and expected to bear and rear children at a tender age at which they should ideally be in schools. He said women cannot make any progress as long as there are child marriages which not only result in denial of educational opportunities but also in deprivation of the joys of girlhood. Child marriages cause physical, mental and emotional cruelty as girls are rushed into adulthood prematurely and made subservient to their husbands. He advocated mobilization of strong public opinion and had supported agitations by the local people against such happenings. He fully supported the Child Marriage Restraint Bill.

Although, Gandhi was married at a young age of 13 he “vehemently” condemned child marriages and argued that ancient Hindu scriptural texts laying down “barbaric” and “degrading” rules regarding women should be revised. Gandhi proposed the idea that child marriages should not occur and that there should be a minimum age at which a girl can be married. This proposal by Gandhi initiated women to take action on this issue. At the first session of the Women's Conference they adopted a resolution urging the



government to make marriages under 16 a penal offence. Although, this did take time to enforce eventually in 1929 the Sarda Act took place fixing the age limit to 15. This was the first legislative enactment the women had won, and a substantial part of this was due to Gandhi's realization that women were equals. Gandhi strongly believed that women and men were of equal sex and women should not be treated any differently. Gandhi stated, "Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him". Gandhi had a strong sense of respect for women in society and believed they needed to be treated equally.

**Views on marriages:** In the periodical 'The Harijan' dated March 22, 1942 Gandhi remarked that marriage is a sacrament and a natural thing in life. It is a contract between consenting individuals this is an artificial fact of life. However thinking of the state of affairs in our country at that time he observed that very few Indians need to marry at the present time. The purpose of marriage is to get progeny but all progeny that is born now is the issue of passion, mean and faithless. Gandhi advised young men not to marry till 25 or 30. He preferred arranged marriages but the young would be couple needs to be consulted by the parents if they are more than 25 years or above. He made this point considering the fact that the population of India grew from 25crores in 1921 and to 36crores in 1951, registering a phenomenal increase. Thus he was duly alarmed by the rapid increase in population and therefore was right in saying that "very few Indians need marry at the present time". His views on the age at marriage for young men are however relevant to this day.

**Widow Remarriage:** One cannot have a better view on widow remarriage than what the Mahatma has presented. Widowhood was seen by him as the one imposed by religion or custom and as an unbearable yoke that defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion. In order to save Hinduism, enforced widowhood must be ridden. Child widows must be duly and well married. Their remarriage is not a remarriage as they were never really married (Young India, 5th August, 1926). Gandhi was deeply concerned about the condition of child widows who were denied the rights to remarry and also suffered other social and legal disabilities. He appealed to the youth of the country to marry the widows and give them a new lease of life. He was also quite hopeful about the immense potentials of the widows in furthering national causes. Further he advised parents to see that the child widows are duly and well married. Regarding adult widows, he felt that the decision to re marry should rest with the widow.

Gandhi did not simply stop after teaching others. He was also the man who led the country by example. In 1918, when his fifty-year old son Hiralal's wife died of influenza Gandhi did not allow him to remarry. He later on relented but wanted Hiralal to marry only a widow. Hiralal was emotionally bankrupt after his wife's death and took to alcohol and women, only to be found dead in the Sewree hospital in midtown Bombay later.

He protested against the prevalent belief that a widow crossing one's path is a bad omen. He considered it to be his good fortune to see a widow in the early hours of the day. He regarded her blessing to be a great boon. He advised every family to treat widow with utmost respect and to give her facilities to expand her knowledge. The ultimate remedy suggested by Gandhi was to consider the widow and the widower on par so far as re marriage was concerned.

**Opposition to Divorce:** The Mahatma was clearly against any kind of male chauvinism. Marriage confers no right upon one partner to demand obedience of the other. However, divorce is not the only

alternative. Marriage is a state of discipline. When one partner breaks discipline the other can break the bond. The breach here is moral and not physical. It precludes divorce. Hinduism regards each as absolute equal of the other. Hinduism leaves the individual absolutely free for the sake of self-realization, for which and which alone he or she is born. Gandhi believed that the purpose of marriage was not serfdom of women for men and that men and women had equal status. The loss of discipline is a moral breach and divorce is not a solution. Moral breach can be corrected by moral restraint and repentance.

**Opposition to Purdah System:** The system of purdah came under Gandhi's attacks. He questioned the very foundation of this practice. Gandhi regarded purdah (veil) as inhuman and immoral, for it impeded the march towards swaraj (self rule) by restricting women. For him, the purdah system was no less than a "vicious, brutal and barbarous" practice for it denied women freedom as well as free gift of nature like light and fresh air. It also crippled the free movement of women; interfered with their advancement and their capacity for doing useful work for the society. It weakened instead of strengthening morality for it did not help in preserving chastity as chastity is not a hothouse growth and cannot be superimposed. It cannot be protected by the surrounding wall of purdah. It must grow from within and must be capable of withstanding every temptation. Men must be able to trust womenfolk as the later are compelled to trust them. He believed that the veil generates the feeling of insecurity in women and results in deterioration of their health. He appealed to public in general and women in particular to tear down purdah. He was sure that abolition of purdah would lead to mass education for both men and women and would help women in gaining strength and becoming an active participant in the struggle for swaraj.

**Abolition of Dowry System:** He condemned dowry marriages as 'heartless' and opined that girls should never marry men who demand dowry, at the cost of their self respect and dignity. He viewed the dowry system as a product of the caste system and thought that the abolition of caste will lead to the abolition of dowry (The Harijan, May 23, 1936). Demanding dowry, according to him was akin to discrediting womanhood. He opined that the custom of dowry turned young girls into mere chattels to be bought and sold. He called this custom pernicious as it lowered the status of women; destroyed their sense of equality with men and defiled the institution of marriage. He had advocated that young men who demand dowry should be excommunicated. Parents of girls should cease to be dazzled by English degrees and should not hesitate to travel outside their little castes and provinces to secure true, gallant young men for their daughters.

To curb the dowry system he advised parents to educate their daughters so that they refuse to marry a young man who wanted a price for marrying and would remain spinster than to be party to the degrading terms. He suggested that a strong public opinion needs to be formulated against dowry and such young men who soil their fingers with such ill gotten gold should be excommunicated from society. He advocated change in education and also stressed the need of taking recourse to radical measure like organizing youth movements and offering satyagraha against those perpetuating the custom.

**Resurrection of Woman's Honor:** It is physically impossible to violate a woman against her will. The outrage against women takes place only when she gives way to fear or does not realize her moral strength. If she cannot meet the assailant's physical might, her purity will give her the strength to die before he succeeds in violating her for example. When a woman is assaulted, her primary duty is self protection. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and if need be, die in the effort (Harijan, March 1, 1942).

Perhaps due to the overriding importance given to female chastity in the Indian society, the Mahatma overemphasized on female chastity and purity. His solution for the helpless woman under sexual assault to die before the violation takes place is a very traditional and conservative view of what women should do when they are sexually assaulted. It is akin to hara-kiri or jouhar. In the days of armed sexual assaults and gang or group sexual assaults on women, the Gandhian solution is inadequate. Further, chastity is not an exclusively female virtue. The male person who assaults sexually also loses his chastity and therefore, he must also die. In fact, chastity as a virtue has been imposed upon women since times immemorial and has been the single most important cause of her degraded status in the society.

He wanted girls to learn the art of protecting themselves against indecent behaviour of unchivalrous youth. If a woman is assaulted she should not stop to think in terms of ahimsa (non violence) as her primary duty is self protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that comes to her mind in order to defend herself with all her strength and if need be die in the effort.

**III-treatment of wives:** According to Gandhi wives should not be treated by their husbands as dolls and objects of indulgence but should be treated as honored comrades in common service. The educationally ill-disposed should be educated by their husbands. He felt that the customary and legal status of women is bad and demands radical change.

**Eradication of Prostitution:** He regarded prostitution as a social disease and a moral leprosy promoted by immoral men. He felt it to be a matter of bitter shame, sorrow and humiliation that a number of women who are compelled to sell their chastity for men's lust. He denounced prostitution but realized that men were responsible for driving women into flesh trade. He advised women to give up this profession and take up living by spinning khadi. He believed that such women can be rehabilitated by getting social acceptance by involvement in a noble cause and by extending opportunities of education and employment.

**Abolition of Devadasi system:** The predicaments of the devadasis, a part of the lower, untouchable segment of the society, had an indelible effect on the sensitive mind of the Mahatma. The pathetic conditions of the child prostitutes disturbed him immensely. He left no stone unturned for rehabilitating this segment of the society. According to Gandhi, one of the first tasks that need to be accomplished as soon as the country won freedom was to abolish the system of devadasis or temple women and brothels.

**Female infanticide:** He was against the practice of female infanticide. He discovered that the birth of a girl was generally unwelcome as she was to be married off and had to live and work in her marital home. Another reason was the custom of dowry which made the girl child liability for her parents. Gandhi was clearly of the view that people should rejoice at the birth of boy as well as girl as the world needs both. People should make no distinction between a son and a daughter and both should be welcomed alike. He also opposed the custom of dowry since it was one of the reasons behind female infanticide.

**Opposition to Sati:** Gandhi found the roots of the sati custom in the blind egoism of men. He argued that if wife must prove her loyalty and undivided devotion to her husband, then the husband must also prove his allegiance and devotion to his wife. To prove her statehood or loyalty she must not mount the funeral pyre of her dead husband but prove it through utilization of every opportunity to add to her stock of knowledge and increase her capacity for cultivating renunciation and self discipline. To him sati was a

futile exercise as instead of restoring the dead husband to life, it takes away one more life. He believed that sati hood is the acme of purity. As purity cannot be attained or realized by dying but can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of spirit from day to day.

## **Conclusion**

Gandhi's socio-political philosophy sought to counter gender inequity which is constructed on patriarchal values. Politics and social life have always been associated with masculinity. The masculinity is concerned with power struggle, coercion, war, greed, selfishness, domination, bloodshed, hatred, deceit, cruelty and above all violence. They are all related to masculine values that incapacitate women to participate in the socio-political processes. The Mahatma had a very sublime and soft view of women and did everything to protect the pleasing side of the traditions. Gandhi expected the women to play a complementary role in the society and wanted women to scale the highest peaks of life in the female domain.

Considering the fact that he wrote and aired his ideas about 80 years ago, we can set aside some of his views such as the women being a complement of men in matters of occupation and education and female chastity in the context of women's honor. The Mahatma, by far, can be considered the best friend of women in India and the world. His purity of thought and honest intentions are beyond question. No other man in the entire history of India or in the world had such godly ideas about women. For both men and women, to have a better perspective of each other and life, Gandhian literature will continue to be a good prescription for many years to come.

Gandhi was not only one of the greatest leaders of Indian Nationalism but a major social and political reformer, who played an important role in purging the Indian society of its inherent evils. He assumed a pioneering role in attempting to eradicate the social wrongs that were committed against the women of the country through ages. Gandhi's political ideologies, strongly anchored in humanitarian values, were a reflection of his spiritual self.

Throughout his life he waged a crusade for the enhancement of the status of women in India. Women under his aegis took a milestone step towards reestablishing their identity in the society. Gandhi's boosted their morale and helped them to rediscover their self esteem. Not only there was a general awakening among the women, but under his leadership, they entered into the national mainstream, taking parts in the National Movements.

Critics may argue that Gandhi did not regard men and women as identical. He did not want women to neglect their families or leave the traditional role of nurturer. He wanted women to attend to the bringing up of their children; give peace to the husband when he return home tired; minister to him; sooth him if he is angry and do any work they can staying at home. He also believed that women's education should be based on their role as nurturers and that woman are co sharer in their husband's privileges. All the above will lead critics to argue that he in fact reinforced gender role that traditional Indian society prescribes for women.

It can be said without an iota of doubt that Mahatma Gandhi was indeed one of the greatest advocates of women's liberty and all throughout his life toiled relentlessly to improve the status of women in his country. His faith in their immense capabilities found expression in his decisions to bestow leadership to them in various nationalistic endeavors.

It is important to remember that Gandhi was neither a feminist nor anti feminist. He was a great soul who was saddened by the deplorable condition of Indian women and wanted to uplift their status; rid them of

suppressive customs; and wanted them to play important role in social, political and economic life of India. He advocated and worked for gender equality and ends of gender violence from the above angle and was successful in making positive change in the lives of many women.

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Authors can submit their contribution for consideration under any of these features:

- Research Articles which present emerging issues and ideas that call for action or rethinking by managers, administrators and policy makers in organizations. Recommended length of the article, not exceeding 7,500 words.
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The following is the suggested format for authors:

- Length: 3500- 5000 words or 10-12 Pages
- Paper Title should be brief
- All authors' Title (e.g. Dr, Mr, Mrs, etc.) & Name, Affiliation, Email etc
- Abstract (not more than 250 words) and Keywords
- Introduction / Background / Objective
- Literature Review
- Methodology, Findings, Analysis & Discussion
- Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations
- References - Harvard or APA Style is required.
- Tables, figures, etc. in their appropriate location in the paper (if applicable)
- Margins: 1 inch or 2.5 cm.
- Font: Times New, 12 points
- Spacing: 1.5 between lines and 2 between paragraphs