

CHAPTER-VII

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two third of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world's income and own less than one hundredth of the world's property.

United Nations Report 1980.

7.1 Introduction :

Among all the pivotal issues concerning the emancipation of women, politics has been playing very important roles. Politics, very simply means the activities involved in getting and using power in public life. Politics is able to influence decisions which affect a country or a society, determines the socio-economic positions of people. Without politics we never can imagine our progress in life and society. To bring changes in the lives of women and thereby in the society, political behaviour of women should be modified and they are to be made more conscious about their basic human rights to lead life with equal opportunities. For the transformation of social situations the need of scientific and liberal political decisions have the special significance. Liberal and scientific political decisions encertain justice in the society. Freedom, justice, co-operation, mutual understanding and liberal outlook all are the primary concern of politics.

For the development and prosperity of individual life and society there is the need of mass participation in politics by all citizens irrespective

of gender differentiation. Social history of the nations proves that the process of development has been continuing in human society by the union of men and women. From the infancy of human civilization the roles of men and women in different fields of lives and in different areas of society have been treated very important. Unfortunately in the name of natural and biological differences between the two sexes domination over the females by the males has become the behavioural trends in societies. This trend, has been encouraging to treat the women with a strong feeling of discrimination. They were treated as different from psycho-physical aspect. And hence their socio-cultural, religious, economic, political etc. positions were forcefully lowered with the help of customs, traditions, and political principles and laws. In the process of social transformation and upliftment, with other factors the roles of the human force has special significance. As an indispensable part of human society, women also help to keep alive the continuity of the history of generation. But unfortunately in the name of sex and gender women are, forcefully, in a very planned manner pushed out from the process of social transformation and mass participation in politics in some of the societies. In the name of sex and gender discrimination was always there towards the womenfolk. This issue has well been highlighted in most of the writings of the women activists. In the words of Mead, "The difference between the sexes is one of the important conditions upon which (mankind) has built the many varieties of human culture that give human beings dignity and stature."¹ 'Differences between the terms gender and sex have well been established by the experts. Women writers have pointed out that 'sex is a biological identity but gender is a social construct.'² In the

words of Bonnie Kime Scott, 'Gender is a category constructed through cultural and social systems. Unlike sex, it is not a biological fact determined at conception ... Gender is more fluid, flexible, and multiple in its options than the... unchanging biological binary of male and female.'³ In the words of Liza, 'Gender, being a cultural construct, is also like, and class, a contending force in cultural politics.'⁴

Therefore, reduce the gap of differences between men and women all are to fight together for democratic principles in politics. More freedom are to be given for equal participation in the process of decision making so as to bring changes in society in a grand scale.

The main objectives of our present discussion are to study and thoroughly discuss the ideologies of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Marx so as to understand the principles of them for the empowerment of women in different situations of life. For emancipation of the women the political views and plan of actions of the three personalities have great significance. Therefore, we feel the need of thorough analysis for logical interpretations of the ideologies and views of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Marx so as to make a systematic and acceptable conclusions.

The term 'ideology' carries wide extensive meaning. We can interpret this term from different directions. Compact Oxford Dictionary has explained the meaning of the term as a system of ideas and principles forming the basis of an economic or political theory. In other sense it means the set of beliefs held by a particular group, say as for example bourgeois ideology. David McLellan begins by claiming, ' Ideology is the most elusive concept in the whole of social science.'⁵ Anyway, to know the historical

background of the emancipation movement of women we are to understand the political ideologies for philosophical rationalisation of the problem. Behind every ideology philosophical principles remain active. Parallely, behind every philosophical thinking or philosophy ideologies of different thinkers remain present. Therefore, in political discussions the terms are very thoroughly used. As both the concepts are very difficult to rationally summarise, experts favoure the use of the concept of 'political philosophy' to study the social implications of ideologies. In the words of Freedon, 'ideologies are forms of political thought that provide important direct access to comprehending the formation and nature of political theory, its richness, varieties, and subtlety. The academic investigation of ideologies... must be accorded equal rank with the study of political philosophy.'⁶

Thus, to understand the concept of women emancipation, and other relevant issues concerning the problem, the political ideologies of Vivekananda, Gandhi and Marx are to be interpreted. Above all, the political philosophies of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Marx are also to be thoroughly interpreted, analysed and the important ideas are to be rationally highlighted to understand the core issues relating to the problem.

7.2 Views of Vivekananda, Gandhi and Marx :

Political ideology as explained by Eatwell Roger and Wright, Anthony(2003,ed.), 'is a relatively coherent set of empirical and normative beliefs and thought, focusing on the problems of human nature, the process of history, and socio-political arrangements. It is usually related to a programme of specific short run concerns. Depending on its relationship to

the dominant value structure, an ideology can act as either a stabilizing or radical force.’⁷

Prior to the discussions of the political ideologies that worked behind the philosophies of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Marx, the primary concepts of different political ideologies are to be thoroughly placed. Political ideologies that determined the groups of political activities in the past and to some extent which are influencing the political exercises of the countries in the present are Liberalism, Conservatism, Social democracy and Democratic socialism, Marxism and Communism, Anarchism, Nationalism, Fascism, Feminism, Islam and Fundamentalism, Laissez-fair, Totalitarianism etc.

Liberalism, in the field of politics, in a sense is a western phenomenon. Liberalism is a political philosophy which always encourages the willingness to respect and accept ideas, principles, behaviours or opinions different from one’s own. In such political ideology high esteem and favour are shown towards individual liberty, free trade and moderate reform. In the words of J.S. Mill, ‘the end of man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal or immutable dictates of reason and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development, of his powers to a complete and consistent whole; that therefore, the object ‘towards which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts...is the individuality of power and development’; that for this there are two requisites, ‘freedom and variety of situation’; and that from the union of these arise an ‘individual vigour and manifold diversity’, which combine themselves in originality.’⁸

Thus, the liberal trend of thinking favoured no discrimination

between males and females. In a sense liberalism did not favour discrimination only because of sex differences. Instead of this, social discriminations according to liberal view points prevailed because of the differences in individual qualities.

‘At the philosophical level, liberals have affirmed a commitment to the concept of equality, liberty, individuality and rationality. They have been egalitarians in the sense of denying that anyone is naturally the subordinate of anyone else.’⁹ In a sense liberal ideals always favoured the equal moral worth of every individuals without any sex discriminations. Worth of individuals according to their own capabilities was the primary goal of the liberal ideals. ‘Philosophically, the liberal canon includes methodological individualists and holists, materialists and idealists, determinists and voluntarists, utilitarians and adherents of natural rights, whilst politically it extends from libertarian upholders of the free market to defenders of the welfare state.’¹⁰

In the process of social change the influence of every political ideology has been proved to be very powerful. Thus, the influence of liberalism in the west encouraged individualism. The trend of individualism again encouraged wars in the name of religious ideologies. Such trend again encouraged the rise of modern science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gradually in the place of feudalism capitalism started to grow during this time and the process of maturation continued throughout the nineteenth century. In the words of Billamy Richard, ‘The basic components of the liberal political settlement were established in the aftermath of the British, American and French revolutions of 1688, 1776, and 1789 respectively. Of primary importance was the principle of the rule of law

which informed the various bills of rights and constitutions which were drafted in order to establish the new political order resulting from these events two criteria guided the framing of these documents. First, laws were to be applied impartially and universally. These were to be no special exemptions for particular groups, such as nobles or clerics, as there had been in the past. Second, the laws were to guarantee to the greatest extent possible the equal right of each individual to pursue his or her own plan of life. For the majority of liberals, the most basic rights in this respect were traditionally the rights to private property and freedom of belief. These rights were essential to their understanding of the virtues of toleration and the market mechanism, which they regarded as the embodiment of the new ethos.¹¹ Thus, the liberal ideals, through the political processes have been favouring equal rights and liberties for all.

Just like liberalism or the liberal ideology, democratic ideology favours equal rights to all. Democracy is specially a form of government in which the people have a say in who should hold power and how it should be used. In such system of governance in the name of sex no discrimination is allowed to exist in the society. Theoretically and in political principles equal rights, liberty and justice are the basic elements of democratic ideology.

The another important political ideology which is the prime concern of our present discussion is Marxism. As a political ideology we are to interpret the basic concept of Marxism and highlight its specific interpretation on the women issues.

Marxism, basically is a doctrine where the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and his friend Friedrich Engels have thoroughly been

included. There are interrelationship between Maxism and Communism. Marxism is the theory or the theoretical explanations of different problems of men and women in society and history and Communism is the practice of such theoretical explanations.

To understand the ideas of Marx regarding the socio-psychological positions of men and women we are to understand his concept of alienation. The term 'alienate' carries the meaning such as to cause to feel isolated. In other sense it means lose of support or sympathy. The place of men and women in history and society has thoroughly been analysed by Marx with the help of the concept of human alienation. Marx always favoured a classless society without any discrimination. To achieve this goal he prescribed communism as the best means.

If we begin our discussion from the views of Vivekananda and Gandhi we can know the trend of political position of women in Indian society. It gets difficult to trace the marks of mass participation of women in the political history of the country. We do not find any historical evidences in the writings of Vivekananda regarding the mass participation of Indian women in the political affairs of the country.

Basically, Vivekananda was a philosopher and a social thinker of modern India. He has been well classed as an idealist philosopher who wanted to bring changes to the social life of human society with the help of liberal outlook. According to Biman Behari Mazumdar the logic that can be placed in support of this assertion can again be collected from "Vivekananda's Modern India." Vivekananda expressed his views as : 'The individual's life is in the life of the whole,... apart from the whole, the

individual's existence is inconceivable-this is an eternal truth and is the bedrock on which the universe is built.'¹² But by the term individual Vivekananda meant the few privileged belonging to the ruling class and by the term 'whole' he meant the underprivileged toiling masses, the multitude. This is apparent from the following statement of Vivekananda made in the same booklet: 'Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolize learning or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of its power always the subject masses. By so much as the class in power severs itself from this source, by so much it is sure to become weak.'¹³ Vivekananda always voiced against the domineering attitude of the rulers of every society of the world and specially in the social system of the Indian society. For him the nature and the attitude of the rulers, more or less in every society of the world are the same. For Vivekananda 'when the interests of the multitude is overthrown and 'when oppression steps into the place of protection' to provide which is the sacred and bounden duty of the rulers, when 'the ruling class is interested only in sucking their blood in place of preservation', there is always 'fierce contest between the rulers and the subjects and by its reaction and convulsion, are flung away the sceptre and the crown'.¹⁴ The explanations placed here help us to conclude that Vivekananda always upholds the rights of the toiling masses and encouraged them to revolt against all the repressive attitudes of the rulers, specially the privileged class of the society. These are some of the supporting logic to prove and reject the general assessment regarding the political ideology of Vivekananda as to be idealistic. In reality, instead of assessing the political ideology of Vivekananda as an idealistic ideology his ideology

should be assessed as the ideology of a revolutionary. He never supported the absolute authority of the State over the toiling masses. From this point Vivekananda may be assessed as the follower of the ideology of Marx in encouraging the toiling masses to revolt against all the repressive attitudes of the rulers. Thus, for the legitimate rights of the women in life Vivekananda always favoured revolutionary approaches. He was in favour of the equal rights of men and women without any discrimination. As politics helps to establish justice in the social life of men and women, Vivekananda always favoured political fight against all the injustices of the rulers. For the emancipation of the women, for Vivekananda politics is one of the most powerful weapons. Politics helps to bring radical changes to the social settings for which women are to fight unitedly for their legitimate human rights. Vivekananda, in a sense accepted the organic theory of Plato, Hobbes and Rousseau at the time of explaining the problems of the society and the prevailing political system. To explain the core issues of the process of social change and the change in the political system of the society, Plato, Hobbes and Rousseau always accepted the organic theory according to which 'individuals are like the cells of an organism and hence have no meaningful existence apart from the whole which implies by inference that they can not have any rights against the State. Only Herbert Spencer sought to give a different interpretation. He said, 'Society exists for the benefit of its members, not its members for the benefit of society.'¹⁵

Vivekananda, as it has been interpreted, very thoughtfully accepted and used the organic theory to explain the problems of the society and politics as well. For him it is the rights of the people which supersede the

rights of everybody else in society, even the rights of the State. 'Accumulation of power', as Vivekananda explained, is necessary as its diffusion, or rather more so. The accumulation of blood in the heart is an indispensable condition for life; its non-circulation throughout the body means death. For the welfare of society, it is absolutely necessary, at certain times, to have all knowledge and power concentrated in certain families or castes, to the exclusion of others, but that concentrated power is focussed for the time being, only to be scattered, broadcast over the whole of society in future. If this diffusion is withheld, the destruction of that society is, without doubt, near at hand.'¹⁶ Thus Vivekananda always felt that in the name of politics the upper class, i.e. the privileged class of the society enjoyed life at the cost of the rights of the sufferers. Therefore, he always favoured a revolutionary change with the help of mass revolution in the society. Vivekananda encouraged the poor or the sufferers to establish their authority and thereby enjoy the rights of the privileged class on wealth, riches, education, culture etc. with the help of revolution. By the privileged class Vivekananda meant the ruling class of the society. In his words, "wisdom, knowledge, wealth, mean strength, prowess, and whatever else nature gathers and provides us with, are all only for diffusion, when the moment of need is at hand. We often forget this fact, put the stamp of "mine only" upon the entrusted deposits, and *pari passu*, we sow the seed of our own ruin!"¹⁷ Thus Vivekananda treated that the wealth of the society over which the rulers establish their authority is the wealth of the subjects or the masses. Therefore to establish justice in the society people are to understand their rights and fight unitedly. Thus for the emancipation of the women Vivekananda

treated revolution as the means for the establishment of justice, the precondition. For him it was the freedom in social life which was the basic need for emancipation.

Regarding the way to achieve freedom Vivekananda referred to social revolution. He emphasised on the radical reform of the society with the help of mass participation of the people in the revolution of the poor. He thought that inequality among the masses was one of the causes of the slow pace of development of the society. So he wanted to abolish such idea from the society with the help of common fight.

Vivekananda was neither a revivalist nor an obscurantist. He was concerned with the current problems of his time arising in the social life of the people. Like economic as well as the social problems Vivekananda noticed all the political problems mainly connected with wealth, riches, education, health, the opportunities of work etc. and tried to remove all these from society with the help of mass movement for justice. Above all he noticed the political problems like slavery, collectivism, state repression etc. Vivekananda realised the problems of the womenfolk and pointed to the causes behind all the problems. For him different causes like the poor economic condition, political deprivation, lack of proper knowledge of the political processes of governance, illiteracy of women were the prime factors for the sufferings of the women with the other poor people of the society. He felt that poverty was the chief problem of the Indian masses. Therefore, to help the women to get relief from the pawn of political repression the economic condition of the women should be uplifted. For this the freedom of thought and work of the women should at any cost be

encertained in the society. Again their political rights should also be guaranteed. According to Vivekananda for the luxury of a handful of the rich the millions of men and women in India have remained submerge in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance. They were deprived of their basic human rights easily because most of them were illiterate poor. Because of their illiteracy and poverty they were ealisy victimised in all spheres of their life. To help the Indian masses to get relief from all the social menace Vivekananda always favoured freedom and justice with the help of political upliftment. For the emancipation of the poor from all the socio-political supression and for the emancipation of the womenfolk Vivekananda favoured freedom as an essential condition of everybody.

For Vivekananda patriotism was an essential condition for the upliftment of social life. The upliftment of social life was an essential condition and the emergent need for the emancipation of the poor and the womenfolk of the society. Vivekananda himself was one of the greatest patriots. He was by spirit and action a great nationalist and an internationalist in outlook. He was proud of his nation as well as the Indian culture which always highlights strong spirit of humanism and tolerance. Vivekananda held that spirituality is the characteristic of Indian culture which is the tremendous gift of India to the whole world. In addition to spirituality the world has to learn the spirit of sympathy, tolerance, humanity and other human virtues from this great nation. To keep the greatness of the country alive he always favoured freedom for just and dignified life of every Indian citizens. For this, political tolerance and justice, as Vivekananda thought were the urgent demand of the society.

Vivekananda never regarded himself as a politician. Yet, because of his real patriotism he so many times pleaded for political liberation of the country. In his own words, "I am not politician or political agitator. I care only for the spirit ... I have said a few harsh words in honest criticism of Christian Government in general but that does not mean that I care for or have any connection with politics."¹⁸ So, though Vivekananda was not directly concerned with politics he treated politics as a method or means through which a nation can move. He said, "Each nation has its own peculiar method of work. Some work through politics, some through social reforms, some through other lines."¹⁹

Vivekananda's mission of life was the upliftment of the poor, downtrodden, illiterate and the labouring class of the society. For the progress of social life and upliftment of the national life emancipation of the women, as Vivekananda thought and preached was an essential condition and urgent requirement of the nation. He believed that through the progress of the oppressed sections, the development of the whole nation was possible. Explaining his plan for the regeneration of the masses, Vivekananda said, '...our mission is for the upliftment of the destitute, the poor and the illiterate peasantry and labouring class'.²⁰ But for this plan Vivekananda never accepted politics. He rejected politics for several reasons. In real sense the distrust of the upper classes led him to reject politics as a means of social progress as a whole. He believed political leadership as a monopoly of the upper classes because they had education and they try to control over them by their powers. He also felt that these people use the ignorant masses to grapple power for themselves.

Without believing politics as the powerful means of social transformation and without accepting political methods Vivekananda worked as a crusader for the rights of the deprived sections including the women of the society. E. P. Chelisev, the well-known Soviet scholar on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda studies, picturised him as a great Humanist, Democrat and Patriot. Chelisev observed, "Together with the Indian people the soviet people who already know some of the works of Vivekananda published in the U.S.S.R highly revere the memory of the great Indian patriot humanist and democrat impassioned fighter for a better future for his people and all mankind."21

Vivekananda believed that human society is governed by four castes - the priests, the soldiers, the traders and the labourers. Vivekananda, thus conceived of an ideal socialistic society in which through the knowledge of the priests, the culture of the military, the dissemination of the soldiers and the ideal of equality of the labourers, the society will be able to forward.

He believed in socialistic system of society and felt such system as necessary for the freedom of the downtrodden as well as the oppressed sections of the society. For Vivekananda this was the political necessity to help them to make free from the domination of the upper classes in the name of economic condition, cultural position and caste as well as gender differences. Vivekananda's view on the socialistic system of society was in a sense similar with Marx. Like Marx Vivekananda thought and fought for the downtrodden of the society. Vivekananda was one of the few thinkers in India who dared to go forward in defence of his people. He preferred to struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed sections including the women

from all the evils of the society with the help of the changes in cultural and religious outlooks. He felt the need of united struggle by all men and women for new and higher things till their death. Vivekananda felt the need of compatriots to become strong and bold, proud and independent considering all these as the major pledges of liberation from slavery. For him like men, women should struggle for their freedom from all the bindings artificially imposed on them in the name of social customs and traditions and political cultures. Vivekananda emphasised on women's power through education. Education, for Vivekananda, was the powerful weapon through which women could solve their own problems. In his own words, "Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them."²²

Vivekananda keenly observed the problems of the women of the whole world and found that all over the world more or less the problems of the women were same. The domination in the name of gender discrimination in all parts of the world was there. For the solution of the problems of the women he favoured socialistic pattern of political governance and felt the need of freedom in the true sense of the term. For the solution of the problems of the women the most strongest means as Vivekananda thought was education. In his own words "Women have many and grave problems but none that can not be solved by that magic word education".²³

Like Vivekananda Gandhi also fought for the emancipation of the downtrodden and the unfortunate sections of the society. In Gandhi's plan of action the question of women emancipation got special importance.

Generally all political philosophies are specially concerned with the nature

of state and purposes and ideology of government. Therefore, to determine the nature and characteristics of political philosophy, it has to be observed the nature and purpose of state and government. Gandhi was not a political philosopher in real sense. We do not find any political doctrine which was preached by Gandhi for the upliftment of the social position of the Indian masses. The political ideas which were scattered in his speeches and writings were not formed as a systematic theory. He enunciated the basic principles of state and government from his own view regarding the political situation of the country. To understand the political doctrine which remain present in the philosophy of life, society, culture etc. of Gandhi we are to study, analyse, and interpret Gandhi's concept of Swaraj, Sarvodaya, Satyagraha etc.

As a religious person and an ideal fighter for socio-political independence of India Gandhi conceived politics from religious ideologies. He applied religion to all practical affairs. For Gandhi political power was not an end but a means which enabled people to make better their condition in every aspect of life. In his own words, "Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore there is no political power because there is no state."²⁴ Gandhi's conception of Ideal society was regarded as stateless democracy based on complete non-violence. Gandhi's ideal society was also conceived as decentralised society. He

preferred decentralization of power as well as wealth in social system. For him, non-violence was the way or means on the basis of which men and women should lead their lives as well as the government. According to Gandhi to maintain a stateless society there should not be any discrimination among the masses.

For Gandhi Swaraj or self-government was the best form of government. In Gandhi's view Swaraj of a people means the sum-total of the swaraj (self-rule) of individual. For the progress and upliftment of the society as a whole, among all sorts of government Gandhi preferred democracy as the best government. For Gandhi socialistic pattern of democracy helps us to solve all the problems of the masses. In such form of government the special emphasis is given on the equality of the citizens without any discrimination of castes, creeds, religions, gender etc. Gandhi believed that true democracy was the result of the non-violent attitudes, spirit of co-operation, equality and justice of the people. In such democracy, as Gandhi conceived, truth was the primary concern and on the basis of truth and justice equal freedom for all is encertained. Hence Gandhi believed in the social equality of all without any discrimination of castes, creed, sex, and gender. Gandhi preferred socialism for the equal progress of all. Not only for the equal progress but also for the emancipation of the women socialism was the solution. Gandhi regarded socialism as the best means for the establishment of a social system which was necessary for the welfare of the masses. For him, economic upliftment and independence was the essential condition for the empowerment of the poor and the downtrodden. He did not treat socialism as the reaction of capitalism as it

was ordinarily believed. He said that this conception was explicit in traditional works. In his own words, "Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalist. As I have contended, socialism, even communism, is explicit in the first verse of Ishopanishad."25 like as,

"Om Isavasyamidam Sarvam Yatkinca
Jagatyam Jagat;
Tena tyaktena bhunjaetha ma grdhal
Kasya sviddhanam."26

The verse means that 'in this world everything is subject to change, yet everything is covered by the Lord. Practise renunciation and be strong in the consciousness of the self. Do not run after any one's wealth.'

So in Gandhi's view socialism was as pure as crystal which emphasised on equality among all. In his own words, "Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware in socialism all the members of society are equal - none low, none high. In the individual body, the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal. So are the members of society. This is socialism."27

Thus, Gandhi emphasised on equality amongst people in all areas of life. He favoured socialism as the political doctrine for the emancipation of the poor and the community of women. He was the follower of Gita's doctrine of equality as taught by Lord Krishna. He believed that all the four castes - Brahman, Kshatriya, Baishya and Sudra should have equal rights without differences. In his own words "I believe in the doctrine of equality

as taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita. The Gita teaches us that members of all the four castes should be treated on an equal basis.”²⁸

Regarding the role and place of women in politics as well as in political activity, Gandhi had great confidence. Gandhi accepted the principle of non-violence in every activity of his life which he realised from the teaching of his wife Kasturiba and considered her as his teacher of non-violence. So he believed that women could perform even the political activities following the principle of non-violence. Realising the power of women, Gandhi for the first time, appealed the Indian women to contribute to National Freedom struggle in 1930. With a very positive outlook he said, “To call women the weaker sex is a libel?, it is man’s injustice to women. If by strength it is meant brute strength then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength it is meant moral power, than woman is immeasurably man’s superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater power of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women”.²⁹ Gandhi believed that the principle of non-violence should be practised in social as well as political activities by the community of the women.

Satyagraha as a political method, was the greatest contribution of Gandhi which aimed at creating a non-violent society based on truth. The term Satyagraha means clinging to truth. According to Gandhi Satyagraha presupposes the cultivation of all kinds of moral virtues inherent in both men and women. He believed that both men and women must acquire moral virtues for the purification of soul. So he accepted satyagraha as a true method for the purification of soul. Thus, Gandhi adopted Satyagraha as a

special means for the growth of perfect human personality.

Gandhi had the chance to take part in various struggles in India for innumerable causes like those against untouchability, cow protection, basic education and above all the freedom struggle. These were termed as Non-Co-operation movement, Civil disobedience movement and Quit India movement which were basically based on the method of satyagraha. Gandhi had used Satyagraha as truth force. Regarding Satyagraha Gandhi said, "I have also called it love force or soul force. In the application of satyagraha I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy."³⁰

Gandhi had never yielded to Untruth, Hatred and Violence in Satyagraha. In his own words, "in the method (Satyagraha) we are adopting in India, fraud, lying, deceit and all the ugly brood of violence and untruth have absolutely no room."³¹

Thus, Gandhi accepted Satyagraha as a method in which three essential components are included. These are Truth, Non-Violence and Tolerance. He started the technique of satyagraha in South Africa and continued through life refining, sophisticating and sharpening it. Gandhi felt that women are to play significant roles in political fields specially in the arena of Indian politics. Gandhi realised and suggested women to play a supportive role in political movement. In 1930 in famous Dandi March Gandhi did not want to include women amongst the core group of seventy nine satyagrahis to break the salt law. The women were angry with such decision of Gandhi. He pleaded the women explaining the reasons for excluding them from the

movement not because of their frailties but “he did not want to give opportunity to the British administration to accuse the satyagrahis that they used women as a shield to protect themselves. Women did not agree with Gandhi’s plea and Mrs. Sorojini Naidu has participated in the Dandi March and large number of women also associated with Gandhi’s civil disobedience movement by breaking the salt law.”³² From such experiences it may easily be concluded that women were very conscious about the political situation of the country and they had strong zeal to take part in the liberation movement of Indian society. Thus, it can also be concluded that women were regarded as an indispensable part of the social reconstruction movement of the country.

In his family life Gandhi considered Kasturiba as a living model of satyagraha. Gandhi stated unequivocally of Kasturiba as, “it is because of her that I am today what I am.”³³ In this respect Shyma Sinha stated, “Mahatma Gandhi had almost threatened to throw ba out of the house for which she admonished Bapu in firm and measured tone that shook Bapu to his sense and realised his fault.”³⁴

Gandhi, more or less emphasised on the active participation of the womenfolk in the political process of the society. There are many situations where the participation of the womenfolk made the situations very dynamic. As for example in the national movement of the country, along with his wife Kasturiba, many distinguished women like Sarojini Naidu, Sushila Nayar Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Sucheta Kripalini etc. were called to associate with him. Gandhi realised the importance of women in the national movement. He wanted to make the provision of social justice for the women and tried to help them to get equal opportunity in social life. He favoured the free

participation of the womenfolk in the national movement. Gandhi understood the qualities of the women and recognised their capabilities to take part courageously even in the military services. Gandhi understood and accepted the capacities of women even in the war fields. He did not favour and accept the spirit of discrimination against the women simply because of gender differences.

Gandhi keenly observed the roles of the women in the national movement and rejected the privilege of the women in violent fighting for the cause of self interest and the interest of the nation. He was very positive about the roles of the Indian women in the nonviolent war than men. For Gandhi, Indian women had strong bearing capacities and they had patience to face the problems of life without any strong objection. Mentioning the example of Indian women Gandhi said, "The women in India tore down the purdah and came forward to work for the nation. They saw that the country demanded something more than their looking after their homes. They manufactured contraband salt, they picketed foreign cloth shops and liquor shop and tried to wean both the seller and the customer from both. At late hours in the night they pursued the drunkards to their dens with courage and charity in their hearts. They marched to jails, and they sustained lathi blows as few men did. If the women of west will try to vie with men in becoming brutes they have no lesson to learn from the women of India. They will have to cease taking delight in sending their husbands and sons to kill people and congratulating them on their valour."³⁵

Thus it can be logically summarised that Gandhi was in favour of equal participation of women in all political affairs and in the process of

social reconstruction for the upliftment of the society as a whole. Gandhi emphasised on the active and equal participation of the women in the freedom struggle of the country. Under the inspiring leadership with special care and loving guidance Indian women got equal opportunities to take active part in most of the programmes of the freedom struggle. Observing the roles of Gandhi in the process of mobilising the women for the participation in the vital political issues for the transformation of Indian societies Rajkumari Amrit Kaur remarked, 'of all the factors contributing to the awakening of women in India none has been so potent as the field of non-violence which Gandhi offered to women in his "war" against British domination of India. It brought them out in their hundreds from sheltered homes, to stand the furnace of a fiery trial without flinching. It proved to the hilt that woman was as much able as man to resist evil or aggression.'³⁶

Like Vivekananda and Gandhi, Marx as a materialistic thinker worked at articulating his philosophical position in general and political as well as philosophical position in specific. His philosophy, in a very broad sense, included politics, economics, and a conception of the historical processes of the world. He was never satisfied with the political, economical as well as the social system of the society in which injustices and inequality occurred amongst people. So Marx fought for the liberation of the oppressed people who were always exploited by the capitalists. Marx totally rejected capitalism and his real mission of life was to overthrow capitalist society for the liberation of the proletariat. In the words of Peter Singer (1980), "Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state

institutions which it had brought into being to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat...”³⁷

Nevertheless Marx was a political philosopher. His political philosophy was mainly based on the principles of Communism. Communism as Frederick Engels has explained in the Manifesto of the Communist Party (p.77) is the doctrine of the conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. To explain the term proletariat Engels has given the explanation as, ‘The proletariat is that class of society which procures its means of livelihood entirely and solely from the sale of its labour and not from the profit derived from any capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose whole existence depend on the demand for labour, hence, on the fluctuations resulting from unbridled competition. The proletariat, or class of proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the nineteenth century.’³⁸ To explain the differences between the socialist and the communist Engels, in the Manifesto explains, ‘The so-called socialists fall into three groups. The first group consists of adherents of feudal and patriarchal society which has been or is still being daily destroyed by large-scale industry, world trade and the bourgeois society they have both brought into existence. From the ills of present-day society this group draws the conclusion that feudal and patriarchal society should be restored because it was free from these ills. Directly or deviously, all its proposals make for this goal. Despite all its professions of sympathy and its bewailing the misery of the proletariat, this group of reactionary socialists will be strongly opposed by the Communists, because

1. it is striving after something utterly impossible;

2. it seeks to establish the rule of the aristocracy, the guild-masters and the manufacturers, with their retinue of absolute or feudal monarchs, officials, soldiers and priests, a society which was indeed free from the vices of present society, but brought at least as many other evils in its train and did not even hold out the prospect of the emancipation of the oppressed workers through a communist organisation;

3. it always gives away its real intentions every time the proletariat becomes revolutionary and communist, when it immediately allies itself with the bourgeoisie against the proletarians.

The second group consists of adherents of present society in whom the evils inseparable from it have awakened fears for its survival. They therefore endeavour to preserve present society but to remove the evils bound up with it. With this end in view, some of them propose measures of mere charity, and others grandiose systems of reform which, under the pretext of reorganising society, would retain the foundations of present society, and thus present society itself. These *bourgeois socialists* will also have to be continuously fought by the Communists, since they work for the enemies of the Communists and defend the society which it is the Communists' aim to destroy.

Finally, the third group consists of democratic socialists, who in the same way as the Communists desire part of the measures ...* not, however, as a means of transition to Communism but as measures sufficient to abolish the misery of present society and to cause its evils to disappear. These *democratic socialists* are either proletarians who are not yet sufficiently enlightened regarding the conditions of the emancipation of their

class, or they are members of the petty bourgeoisie, a class which, until the winning of democracy and the realisation of the socialist measures following upon it, has in many respects the same interest as the proletariat. At moments of action the Communists will, therefore, have to reach an understanding with these democratic socialists, and in general for the time being pursue as much as possible a common policy with them, in so far as these democratic socialists do not enter the service of the ruling bourgeoisie and attack the Communists. It is obvious that this common action does not exclude the discussion of differences with them.’³⁹ Thus Marx and his political philosophy always supported the emancipation movement of the masses i.e. the proletarians. He never said specifically for the emancipation of the women and the active participation of the women in politics. He only uttered his voices for the oppressed people without any discrimination between men and women. As a political philosopher Marx opposed to the state and sought to abolish it. He conceived of an idea of stateless society free from any kind of exploitation. Here in this point we find similarity between Marx and Indian national leader Gandhi. Gandhi also opposed the idea of state and his opposition was based on the fact that state means powers and for the maintenance of that power force and violence is essential. State as Gandhi assessed was an organisation of force and violence. Marx also opposed the idea of the existence of state because Marx believed that the rule of the state was an instrument of exploitation of the ‘have nots’ by the ‘haves’. Marx was of the opinion that the class which enjoyed the economic power in the society also enjoyed the political power of the state. Marx was in a sense an anarchist as he opposed to political authority of the

state over the individual. Marx was the critic of that politics and that political power with the application of which the upper class exploited the lower class people i.e. the proletariat.

Marx tried to abolish the state which was based on the domination of one over the another class of the society. Overthrowing such state Marx approached the idea of that state in which all men and women were treated equally and proletariat class had its chance to establish its status in a high manner. According to G.K. Gehrana, 'Marx would first abolish the present state based on the domination of one class over the other and replace it by a 'quasi state' on the dictatorship of the proletariat. This would be the first phase of Communism.'⁴⁰

Marx emphasised on the establishment of Communism in society through which it was easy to establish equality in society. Like the working class of men the working women were also exploited by the capitalists. Therefore, Marx tried to establish Communism through Socialism by the elimination of capitalism. For him this was the only political solution to the problem of women emancipation. Marx was of the opinion that like men women also constituted a part of nation's proletariat. So along with men, it was the need to emancipate them from the enslavement in most of the vital spheres of life.

In the present day social life, for the solution of the problems of the poor, the downtrodden and the proletarians the Marxian political philosophy in the form of Communism, in a sense may be the solution. Above all Marx, the political principles of Gandhi, i.e. socialism and the same principle of Vivekananda may be the political solution, of the

problems concerning to the emancipation movement of the women of the globe. Political consciousness among the women has been treated as one of the basic needs of the hour for the solution of all the problems concerning to the basic human rights of the women. In this point Gandhi, Marx and Vivekananda more or less put forward the same views but in different terms. Political equality between men and women in practical life, can help to achieve the goals of their emancipation movements for which the philosophies of Gandhi, Marx and Vivekananda may be the best possible solutions.

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