



# Revisiting Gandhi: Women's Perspective

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## 1. Introduction

The roles of women in this modern age have changed after generations of silence. Women's stories of their struggles for social change, justice, and for peace are beginning to be told. There are a significant number of stories in Northern Ireland of women protesting against violence, of Palestinian and Israeli women trying to overcome barriers of distrust and enmity, of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, of Japanese women protesting racism and nuclearism, of South African women whose long history of non-violent resistance has been central to that country's struggle. Women are the pioneers of nation. Indian culture attaches great importance to women, comprising half of world's population. According to a report of secretary general of United Nations, women constitute 50 % of human resources, the greatest human resource next only to man having great potentiality.

Women are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family. The varieties of role the women assume in the family are those of wife, leader, administrator, manager of family income and last but not the least important the mother. In this article we are able to talk about the role of women in peace making in Indian Context.

## 2. Research question

What differences exist in the peacemaking efforts of women and men in Indian Community and the entire human society?

## 3. Research objective

The objective of the study is to determine the peace making process and efforts of women in Indian community, in order to specifically explicate the roles of women in peace making and the motivating force behind their efforts.

## 4. Characteristics & Significance of Women's Work for Peace

Birgit Brock-Utne, cited in Gnanadason et al. (2005), has enumerated the characteristics and significance of women's work for peace as follows:

- It is connected to the concern for human life, especially for children, but also for themselves.
- It makes use of a varied set of non-violent techniques, acts and strategies.

## 5. The concept of peace

According to Okai (2008), peace means freedom from quarrel, strife, conflict, rioting, disorder, hostility, violence, or war. Halverstadt (1991) maintained that "**peace is a state of existence where the claims and needs of all (that is) are satisfied; where there is relationship of communion between God, humans and nature, and where there is fulfillment for all creation**". Hence, peace can not be built by following a negative path but primarily concentrating on the positive affirmation of peace. When there was enough food for everyone to eat, peace would reign in homes, families, communities, clans and kingdoms. No one had any reason to be envious of anybody. Communities could live in peace, visit one another during the off-seasons attending weddings, festivals as well as funerals.

## 6. What is a community?

Community is a group of people who have the same religion, race, job, etc., for example, the Nigerian community in India or the Nigerian Community in the USA and or South Africa. Community therefore could be described as a group of persons living in one place, district or country. These groups of people have the same religion, race, occupation, etc., and with common

interests in most cases. These communities are made up of families. Families are made up of literate and non-literate people, business executives, farmers, traders, teachers, civil servants, casual laborers, etc. The families and its environments provide the child with his first social experiences. It is a social entity because; it contains a group of people who functions together as a unit. It is a psychological entity because each one of its members has needs, feelings and attitudes, which are of importance to them and to the family and to the economic entity.

### 7. The peace making process

Despite the patriarchal nature of Indian continent, women start the peace keeping efforts through positive child care. Especially, the girls are “reared to be docile, obedient and nice. In many places, they are brought up to believe that their role is to serve men, to sacrifice their own needs for the good of the man, for the well-being of the family”. When they become women and mothers, they are committed, loyal and are role models. That is why the traditional Indian society assigns to them the role of educators. The role starts from the cradle and is involved in the activities the child participates in both at home and among his peers. Peace making is implanted into the child’s mind gradually and molded in the behavior and personality of the child through the agency of the family and mother. The children remained with their mothers, who taught them the behavior and ethics of the society and impressed on them the importance of such values as honesty, uprightness, sincerity and or truthfulness, etc., through their motherly role, the culture of peace is entrenched in the children as a foundation for peaceful living in the family, the community and the society as a whole.

Secondly, the role of the elderly women is very important. The elderly women are respected by all, they play a key role in crisis management and peace making in the community. When a conflict degenerates, an appeal would be made to a third party of mature years, to calm the situation. Furthermore, it is structured in ways that encourage cohesiveness and peaceful co-existence from time to time like any other human society. It also experiences conflicts, which may arise between individuals within a family,

between different families or between the inhabitants of different territories. To manage such conflicts, traditional society had well organized regulatory machinery in which women generally played a major part. A woman under this condition are recognized as playing an advisory role, behind the scene especially where the husband was concerned and as playing proactive role in strengthening solidarity and social harmony in general. It is important to note that in this community, the wife or women exercises a consideration influence over her husband. “Women are more tolerant. They are very supportive to the men; and can help in bringing factions together”. Traditionally, women are seen as closer to the life-giving earth, associated with fertility and circles. Women as nature, as sexuality, as fertility, as fertility are mythic images deeply embedded in our cultural psyches. Apparently, women have played many roles in various societies throughout history. She has been a wife, a mother, a farmer, a laborer, business executive, a teacher, a volunteer worker ... Most women have combined two or more of these roles. Throughout the countries, almost every society has developed definite ideas of what are proper for women. These are divided into two parts. One focuses on overall process, the other is on the role of women in the process.

### 8. Methodology

The paper is a meta-analytical study, which relied on secondary sources of information such as text book, newspaper, magazines, and journal articles. It is a qualitative study which is based on conceptual, historical and theoretical analysis. It considers women’s role in peace-making, conflict resolution and rehabilitation from and an emic perspective.

#### 1. Woman as a Wife

Woman is man’s helpmate, partner and comrade. She sacrifices her personal pleasure and ambitions sets standard of morality, relieves stress and strain, tension of husband, and maintains peace and order in the household. Thereby she creates necessary environment for her male partner to think more about economic upliftment of family. She is the source of inspiration to man for high endeavour and worth achievements in life.

## 2. As an administrator and Leader of the Household

A well-ordered disciplined household is essential to normal family life. The woman in the family assumes this function. She is the chief executive of an enterprise. She assigns duties among family members according to their interest and abilities and provides resources in terms of equipment and material to accomplish the job. As an administrator, she organizes various social functions in the family for social development. She plans various recreational activities to meet the needs of young and old members of the family.

## 3. As a Manager of Family Income

Woman acts as the humble manager of the family income. It is her responsibility to secure maximum return from every rupee spent. She always prefers to prepare a surplus budget instead of a deficit budget. She is very calculating loss and gain while spending money. She distributes judiciously the income on different heads such as necessities, comforts and luxuries. The woman in the family also contributes to the family income through her own earning within or outside the home.

## 4. As a Mother

The whole burden of child bearing and greater part of child rearing task are carried out by the woman in the family. She is primarily responsible for the child's habit of self-control, orderliness, industriousness, theft or honesty. Her contacts with the child during the most formative period of his development sets up his behavior pattern.

She is the first teacher of the child. She transmits social heritage to the child. It is from mother that the child learns the laws of the race, the manner of men, moral code and ideals.

## 9. Managerial Implication

Women have the tendency to encourage more participatory conflict resolution. They prefer to resolve issues through inclusion and attempt to enhance negotiating member's self-worth. Nowadays, emphasis is given to teamwork, flexibility, information sharing and trust instead of rigidity, competitive individualism, control and

secrecy. Women seem to have excelled in the former. A peace facilitator is as well a good listener and motivator, who provides support to the people within a given community. Several women seem to do these things better. The leadership styles women typically use can make them better at resolving conflict, as they are inclined to treat dialogues from the perspective of an ongoing relationship- working hard to make the other party a winner in its own and other's eyes. Hence, women tend to be more polite at resolving conflict than men. They use soft persuasive tactics rather than direct confrontation and threats. They lay emphasis on a win-win solution and create an open and trusting climate to resolve conflict and promote peaceful co-existence.

## 10. Conclusion

The woman performs the role of wife, partner, organizer, administrator, director, re-creator, disburser, economist, mother, disciplinarian, teacher, health officer, artist and queen in the family at the same time. Apart from it, Woman plays a key role in the socio-economic development of the society.

Moreover it is the women who have sustained the growth of society and moulded the future of nations, in the emerging complex social scenario, women have a vital role to play in different sectors. They can no longer be considered as mere harbingers of peace but are emerging as the source of power and symbol of progress.

## References

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