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Role of Influential Women in Shaping Gandhi's Views on Women's Social Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

The role of influential women in shaping Mahatma Gandhi's views on women's social empowerment was profound and multi-faceted. Gandhi, though often recognized for his political leadership, was deeply influenced by women in both his personal life and public engagements, which helped him appreciate the transformative potential of women in society. From his mother, Putlibai, he imbibed values of compassion, self-discipline, and moral courage, which shaped his belief in the ethical and spiritual strength of women. Women leaders and reformers such as Kasturba Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, and Annie Besant further influenced his understanding of women's roles beyond domestic spheres. Kasturba, as his life partner, not only supported his political endeavors but also actively participated in social reforms, embodying resilience and leadership. Sarojini Naidu's eloquence and activism in the nationalist movement impressed Gandhi with women's capacity for public leadership and social reform. Annie Besant's involvement in education and women's rights highlighted the importance of empowerment through knowledge and civic participation. Interactions with such women convinced Gandhi that women were not merely passive participants but pivotal agents of social change, capable of leading reform movements, promoting nonviolence, and shaping moral and ethical standards in society, thus reinforcing his vision of a socially empowered and equitable India.