



Gandhian Approaches to Incarceration: Causes, Consequences and Sustainable Solutions for Women Behind Bars.

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ABSTRACT

The subject matters of Women in Development (WID), Women for Development (WFD), and Women and Development (WAD) are being discussed at global, national, regional, and local levels, highlighting the crucial roles women play in various aspects, from leadership to managing home resources. Despite their invaluable contributions, much of the work women perform within households remains invisible, unaccounted for, and undervalued, as they are often seen primarily as caretakers for individuals from infancy to old age. Their absence is acutely felt in families, particularly in the face of undetected illnesses, underscoring their role in not only building homes but also contributing significantly to nation-building. However, in certain circumstances, women may become involved in illicit activities, leading to police investigations, court interventions, and incarceration when proven guilty. This paper examines the adoption of Gandhian methods for the reformation and reintegration of incarcerated women, integrating sustainable development goals such as gender equality (SDG 5), quality education (SDG 4), and economic empowerment (SDG 8), while emphasizing the importance of economic self-reliance and rehabilitative measures for sustainable



societal growth. By exploring how Gandhian principles of nonviolence, truth, selfreliance, and constructive work can be applied to rehabilitate and empower incarcerated women, the study aims to propose actionable strategies for their holistic reintegration into society. It also delves into how fostering skills, providing education, and creating livelihood opportunities for these women can contribute to reducing recidivism, enhancing their dignity, and enabling their active participation in the broader development process, ultimately ensuring their transformation from marginalized individuals to contributors to social progress. The research methodology employed is descriptive and analytical in nature.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women in Development (WiD), Women for Development (WfD), and Women and Development (WaD) are key topics discussed at international, national, regional, and local forums. Women's roles and voluntary contributions to development are vast, yet often unnoticed, undervalued, and unaccounted for. Economically, if the services provided by women were monetized and included in Gross National Product (GNP) calculations, many nations would surpass the GNP of developed countries. Socially, women fulfil multiple roles as mothers, wives, daughters, and caregivers, supporting family members from infancy to old age. (Ramaswamy and Kavitha, 2022). Many countries have implemented policies to improve women's employability, wages, social protection, and empowerment, aiming to reduce unemployment and enhance their influence at family, national, and regional levels. (Petra Todd, 2012). The WiD approach focuses on integrating women into existing development programs, emphasizing vocational training and rehabilitation for marginalized women prisoners. This training prepares them for productive reintegration into society. In contrast, the WFD approach views women as active agents of change, highlighting the importance of their participation in self-help groups (SHGs) and small-scale industries within prisons. The WaD perspective addresses the structural inequalities that impede women's contributions to development, advocating for systemic changes that enhance their participation. In India, women prisoners engage in various economic activities that hold value both inside and outside the prison system. Many participate in labour-intensive tasks, such as producing Khadi and handicrafts, which support the prison and national economy. Additionally, some women cultivate fruits and vegetables, contributing to the local food supply and



reducing prison operational costs. Vocational training programs in Indian prisons teach valuable skills like tailoring, embroidery, and food processing, enabling women to gain certifications that enhance their employability post-release. Many also join SHGs to manage small-scale ventures and support their families financially. Successful graduates often start businesses, such as tailoring shops or food stalls, creating job opportunities and contributing to the broader economy. These educational initiatives have been shown to reduce recidivism rates by equipping women with the skills necessary for financial stability, ultimately lessening their reliance on the criminal justice system and lowering state costs associated with re-incarceration. By recognizing and fostering the economic contributions of women prisoners, these programs empower them as active participants in their own rehabilitation and societal reintegration.

2. DEFINATION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

According to Sethna (1952) in his book *Society and the Criminal* refutes prison: “A prison (meaning of “a cage”) is a place for detention, prisons are places for the detention of under-trials also. They are the place where the offender can be lodged for his/her reformation.” In the words of Vidyabhushan “Prison is a place properly arranged and equipped for the reception of persons who by legal process are committed to it for safe custody while awaiting trial or for punishment.” As stated in the Ordinance of 1894, a prison is a specific building complex established and maintained by the state government for the temporary or permanent confinement of convicts and under-trials. Based on the definitions the authors have framed the following objectives to write a paper on “Gandhian approaches to incarceration: causes, consequences, and sustainable solution for women behind bars” Such objectives are: Gandhian methods for the reformation and reintegration of incarcerated women; integrating sustainable development goals such as gender equality (SDG 5), quality education (SDG 4), and economic empowerment (SDG 8), while emphasizing the importance of economic self-reliance and rehabilitative measures for sustainable societal growth. By exploring how Gandhian principles of nonviolence.

3. METHODOLOGY

Secondary Data and Evidence: This paper utilizes secondary data, derived from a literature review and expert analysis. The necessary information has been gathered from a range of sources, including articles, journals, government reports, census data, and websites.

4. CAUSES OF WOMEN'S INCARCERATION



4.1 Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Women's Incarceration

The relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and women's incarceration reveals systemic challenges that funnel vulnerable populations into the criminal justice system. Poverty, limited education, and economic marginalization create powerful barriers, disproportionately impacting women from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds (Western & Pettit, 2010). Economic vulnerability often leads to survival-based crimes such as theft, drug offenses, and underground economic activity (Travis et al., 2014). Educational disparities further heighten this risk. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 37% of incarcerated women have not completed high school, and less than 3% hold a college degree (Harlow, 2003). Moreover, 66% were unemployed prior to incarceration, demonstrating the strong link between economic opportunity and legal compliance. Marginalized women including Indigenous, immigrant, and women of color face layered disadvantages, such as systemic discrimination, limited social support, and domestic violence (UNODC, 2020). These factors significantly increase their risk of incarceration. Substance abuse frequently emerges as a coping mechanism for economic and emotional strain, further entrenching involvement in the justice system (Mallicoat, 2016). Globally, women's imprisonment rates are rising faster than men's, particularly in regions marked by economic inequality (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2018). To reverse this trend, policies must prioritize education, job training, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenses (Pager, 2007). Addressing the root causes of women's criminal justice involvement is essential. Ultimately, women's incarceration is a story of economic survival and systemic inequality requiring compassionate, comprehensive solutions for true reform.

4.2 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues

The intersection of substance abuse and mental health disorders is a critical factor driving women's involvement in the criminal justice system, reflecting deeply rooted psychological and social challenges (Kaminer et al., 2022). Research highlights the strong connection between trauma, mental illness, and substance use among incarcerated women. Approximately 75–85% of justice-involved women experience co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders, a rate significantly higher than in previous decades (Armstrong et al., 2023). Trauma is central to this dynamic. A study by Rodriguez et al. (2021) found that up to 92% of incarcerated women have endured multiple traumatic experiences ranging from childhood abuse to domestic violence and sexual assault. These traumas often lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms, including substance use and high-risk behaviors, which increase their vulnerability to incarceration. Neuroscientific research underscores how trauma and chronic



substance abuse alter brain chemistry, impairing emotional regulation, cognition, and decision-making (Williams et al., 2022). These neurobiological shifts present major obstacles to recovery and reintegration. Addressing this crisis requires trauma-informed, gender-responsive interventions that prioritize mental health and addiction treatment. Without such comprehensive support, justice-involved women remain trapped in cycles of trauma, substance use, and incarceration.

4.3 Domestic Violence and Victimization

The intersection of domestic violence and women's criminal justice involvement highlights a complex interplay of trauma, systemic inequality, and legal misinterpretation (Miller et al., 2022). Far from being solely a matter of criminal behavior, women's justice system interactions often stem from prolonged experiences of intimate partner violence and survival-driven responses. Research by Rodriguez and Chen (2023) reveals that 70–80% of incarcerated women have endured significant domestic violence prior to their justice involvement. These traumatic experiences shape emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns that are frequently misunderstood by legal systems. Rather than receiving support as survivors, many women are criminalized for behaviors rooted in self-preservation. Self-defense is a critical lens through which to understand these cases. Thompson et al. (2024) show that a considerable number of women's offenses occur in the context of responding to ongoing abuse. These acts, often carried out in desperation or fear, are not adequately recognized as survival strategies within traditional legal frameworks. The failure to address the root causes of women's behavior particularly the role of domestic violence perpetuates cycles of victimization and incarceration. A trauma-informed, gender-responsive approach is essential to ensure justice systems protect rather than punish survivors of abuse.

4.4 Discrimination and Systemic Bias

Gender bias in the criminal justice system remains a pervasive issue, manifesting through institutional discrimination and systemic inequities. Research shows that gender stereotypes influence every stage of the legal process from arrest to sentencing often disadvantaging women (Demuth & Steffensmeier, 2020). Female offenders are frequently judged not only by their crimes but also by their adherence to traditional gender roles and maternal expectations. Nagel and Johnson (2021) found that women who deviate from conventional norms, especially in violent or drug-related cases, are more likely to receive harsher sentences. This bias intensifies for women of color and those from marginalized backgrounds. Acker and Webber (2022) further highlight gender disparities in pre-trial detention, bail



decisions, and plea bargaining, particularly affecting women with economic hardships or trauma histories. Globally, gender-based discrimination is consistent across criminal justice systems. Rodriguez et al. (2023) noted that women are often pathologized, with their actions viewed through psychological or moral lenses. Intersectionality compounds these challenges, especially for Indigenous women and others from disadvantaged groups (Thompson & Williams, 2024). To address this, UNODC (2023) recommends gender-responsive reforms, including bias training, equitable sentencing guidelines, and oversight mechanisms. Such steps are essential for ensuring fair treatment and justice for women worldwide.

4.5 Economic Disadvantage

Incarceration exacerbates economic disadvantage for women, leading to job loss, housing instability, and persistent financial insecurity upon release. Women with criminal records face severe employment discrimination, particularly in roles requiring trust or responsibility, and are often viewed through the lens of societal expectations around motherhood (Pager, 2007). This stigma limits financial independence and pushes many into low-paying or informal jobs, reinforcing cycles of poverty and increasing the risk of recidivism.

Housing insecurity is another critical barrier. Landlords often deny housing to formerly incarcerated women, citing safety concerns. This disproportionately affects women with children, who face heightened risks of homelessness (Visher & Travis, 2021). Studies reveal that formerly incarcerated women are more likely than men to experience housing instability due to societal perceptions and a lack of support. Educational and skill gaps compound these challenges. Many incarcerated women have lower educational attainment, limiting their access to meaningful employment (National Women's Law Center, 2023). Internationally, systemic barriers further restrict women's reintegration, particularly in low-income regions (UNODC, 2022). The economic instability also affects their families, leading to intergenerational poverty and poor outcomes for children (Murray & Farrington, 2019). Addressing these issues requires comprehensive policy reforms centered on employment, housing, education, and stigma reduction.

4.5 Poverty, Crime, and Social Exclusion

Women's incarceration often leads to long-lasting consequences, particularly in poverty, crime, and social exclusion. Upon release, many women face overwhelming challenges unemployment, housing instability, and stigma that hinder successful reintegration. Without adequate support systems, these



women are at high risk of recidivism. Incarcerated women, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, frequently lose jobs, housing, and social ties. Their criminal records limit employment opportunities, especially for drug-related or violent offenses (Wolfe & Koper, 2021). Limited access to education and training during incarceration worsens economic instability post-release (Shannon, 2021). Social exclusion further compounds their difficulties. Stigma, damaged family relationships, and restricted access to housing, healthcare, and services contribute to emotional distress and isolation (Breen, 2020; Richie, 2020). This exclusion, coupled with financial insecurity, often leads women to reoffend out of necessity. Many engage in survival crimes like theft or drug offenses (NIJ, 2022). The prevalence of trauma, abuse, and substance dependence among incarcerated women demands trauma-informed care for effective reintegration (APA, 2021). Internationally, similar patterns persist. The UK's Prison Reform Trust (2021) highlights poverty, poor support services, and social exclusion as key drivers of recidivism among women. Addressing these issues through holistic reintegration programs is vital to breaking cycles of incarceration and disadvantage.

4.6 Women's Empowerment and Economic Development

Women's empowerment and economic development are closely linked, yet progress requires sustained policy efforts (Duflo, 2012). Boserup's pioneering work emphasized how development affects women, influencing gender-focused policies (Boserup et al., 2007). The U.S. Department of State notes that women's economic participation enhances growth through increased productivity and community reinvestment. However, discriminatory laws, limited access to finance, technology, and training remain key barriers. Investments in financial inclusion, leadership, and gender-sensitive data are essential. The Confederation of Indian Industry (2022) highlights women's crucial role in sustainable development, though India's female labor participation remains low at 25%, despite women comprising nearly half the working-age population. McKinsey estimates that gender parity could add \$770 billion to India's GDP by 2025. Siddiqi (2023) notes that unpaid caregiving limits women's workforce participation, while Kaul (2024) reveals that full gender parity is still 134 years away. India ranks low in economic parity, with women earning only Rs. 39.8 for every Rs. 100 earned by men. The World Bank (1979) reported that women's economic roles often go unrecognized, particularly in domestic and agricultural sectors. Salem (2020) and Ellen Goldstein stress that empowering women with legal reforms and training enables them to overcome traditional barriers and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

5. REMEDIAL MEASURES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS



Regional collaboration is crucial in addressing women's incarceration by enabling countries to share best practices, coordinate efforts, and uphold human rights standards. The Council of Europe (2017) emphasizes gender-responsive treatment, including healthcare, education, and rehabilitation. EU initiatives like the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and Restorative Justice for Women promote alternatives to imprisonment and address root causes like domestic violence and inequality. Regional partnerships also enhance training for justice professionals, as seen in UNODC's Asia-Pacific programs, fostering trauma-informed care and mental health support. Such cooperation ensures humane, consistent treatment for women prisoners across borders and supports systemic reform. Regional collaboration is vital in addressing the challenges women face in the criminal justice system. In Latin America, the IACHR advocates for joint efforts to tackle violence, discrimination, and poor prison conditions in countries like Brazil and Mexico. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) promotes gender-sensitive policies, diversion programs, and rehabilitation, improving outcomes in South Africa and Zimbabwe. In East Africa, cooperation among Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania has enabled joint research on the root causes of women's incarceration. These efforts enhance data collection, inform policy, and promote alternatives to imprisonment, ensuring gender-responsive justice and better reintegration for women across regions.

Capacity building is essential for equipping criminal justice professionals with the skills to address gender-specific challenges faced by women in the justice system. The UNODC (2014, 2021) highlights the need for training on trauma-informed care, mental health, and gender-based violence. In Asia-Pacific, the UNODC has implemented regional programs to train officers in gender-responsive practices. Similarly, the IACHR supports capacity-building in Latin America to improve responses to domestic abuse and poverty-related issues. In Africa, initiatives by the African Commission and African Union offer training and technical assistance, focusing on health care, mother-child separation, and the humane treatment of female offenders. At the national level, the U.S. has invested in capacity-building initiatives to improve the treatment of women in the criminal justice system. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funds programs like the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), focusing on trauma-informed care, female offending factors, and rehabilitation. These initiatives promote informed, empathetic responses to women's needs (BJA, 2020). Universities like the University of Edinburgh offer specialized courses on gender and criminal justice, training future professionals on the intersection of gender, race, and criminalization (University of Edinburgh, 2021). Ongoing capacity-building efforts are crucial for gender-sensitive, rehabilitative criminal justice systems.



Community partnerships are vital in supporting justice-involved women and reducing recidivism. Collaborations among local organizations, healthcare providers, and social services offer holistic care tailored to women's needs addressing issues like poverty, trauma, and motherhood. Programs led by groups like the Vera Institute of Justice and the National Institute of Justice emphasize alternatives to incarceration, such as job training, housing support, and mental health services (Vera Institute, 2019; NIJ, 2020). Internationally, Canada supports Indigenous women's reintegration through culturally appropriate, community-led programs (OCI, 2021). These partnerships promote healing, reduce systemic harms, and improve public safety by prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment. Community partnerships are essential in providing effective, rehabilitative support for women involved in the criminal justice system. These collaborations among community organizations, healthcare providers, social services, and educational institutions offer a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of women's criminal behavior, such as trauma, poverty, addiction, and mental health challenges. By prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment, community-based initiatives help reduce recidivism and promote successful reintegration.

Organizations like the Vera Institute of Justice and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) emphasize the importance of local-level partnerships that provide gender-responsive alternatives to incarceration, including housing support, vocational training, parenting programs, and trauma-informed care (Vera Institute, 2019; NIJ, 2020). These programs are particularly effective because they are culturally relevant and community-driven, ensuring that women receive support aligned with their lived experiences and local realities. Internationally, community-based reintegration models have proven effective, especially among marginalized populations. In Canada, local partnerships involving Indigenous-led organizations provide culturally appropriate services such as healing circles, counseling, and family reunification, which are critical in reducing recidivism among Indigenous women (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2021). Overall, these partnerships not only improve outcomes for women but also enhance public safety and strengthen community resilience. Reentry programs are essential for supporting formerly incarcerated women as they transition back into society. These programs address complex challenges such as trauma, substance abuse, mental health issues, and caregiving responsibilities. Holistic services like housing support, job training, counseling, and parenting assistance reduce recidivism and foster successful reintegration (NIJ, 2012). Local, community-based efforts such as those by the Women's Prison Association emphasize case management, peer support, and mentoring to help women overcome post-release barriers (WPA, 2020; Vera Institute, 2021). Gandhi's vision of prisons as spaces for self-transformation enhances the reentry framework. His emphasis on moral upliftment and personal



growth suggests the integration of educational, vocational, and wellness programs within correctional facilities. Meditation, yoga, and mindfulness-based practices can promote emotional well-being and resilience (Sharma, 2006). Community-driven rehabilitation, rooted in Gandhian values, encourages NGOs and local groups to provide skill-building, mental health services, and family counseling (Bhattacharya, 2015). Economic empowerment through 'swadeshi'-inspired programs like weaving, organic farming, and handicrafts can help women attain self-reliance. Cooperative models enable financial independence and confidence (Parel, 2000). Educational and vocational training builds self-esteem and post-release employability, especially when supported by institutions and industries (Bose, 2020). Mental health care and restorative justice practices, aligned with Gandhi's ideals of peace and reconciliation, foster healing and reintegration (Agnew, 1992; Bhattacharya, 2015). Legal aid and paralegal training can empower women to assert their rights, while alternatives to incarceration such as probation and community service strengthen justice delivery (NCRB, 2022).

6. EMPOWERING WOMEN IN PRISON THROUGH GANDHIAN CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMMES

Khadi and Village Industries: Promotion of handspun and handwoven cloth (Khadi) and support for small-scale rural industries to promote self-reliance and economic independence. Supporting the production and use of handspun and handwoven cloth to promote self-reliance and economic independence. Encouraging the establishment and growth of small-scale industries in rural areas to create jobs and enhance local economies. Training women prisoners in handspun and handwoven cloth (Khadi) equips them with skills for employment or entrepreneurship, aiding their rehabilitation and fostering economic independence. By producing and selling Khadi, they can achieve financial stability, reducing reoffending risks. This training also supports smoother reintegration into society and provides a constructive focus during incarceration. Promoting small-scale rural industries creates jobs and strengthens local economies. Women skilled in Khadi production can start or join businesses, boosting rural development and supporting sustainability. Khadi production is environmentally friendly, aligns with global sustainability goals, and offers women a path to entrepreneurship and self-esteem post-release.



Education: Basic education (Nai Talim) with a focus on practical skills and vocational training, integrating moral and ethical values. Implementing educational programs that combine academic learning with practical skills and vocational training. Offering literacy and continuing education programs for adults to improve their knowledge and skills. Basic education focused on practical skills enhances the employability of women in prison by providing valuable abilities that are directly applicable to the job market. Vocational training offers hands-on experience, boosting their chances of securing stable employment upon release. Literacy and continuing education programs further improve their knowledge and skills, making them more competitive for various job opportunities. Integrating moral and ethical values into education fosters personal development and accountability, helping women build self-worth and integrity essential for reintegration. Practical skills and vocational training prepare them for life outside prison, offering a constructive focus during incarceration and easing their transition back into society. This education not only builds confidence and a sense of purpose but also equips women to overcome post-release challenges, increasing their likelihood of becoming self-sufficient and reducing the chance of reoffending.

Health and Hygiene: Improvement of sanitation, personal hygiene, and public health to prevent disease and promote well-being. Sanitation Campaigns: Promoting better sanitation practices, waste management, and access to clean water. Establishing health centres and mobile clinics in underserved areas to provide medical care and health education. Improved sanitation and personal hygiene prevent disease spread and enhance physical health among women in prison, boosting their overall quality of life. Sanitation campaigns promote effective waste management and clean water access, reducing the risk of infections and supporting better health and rehabilitation. Health centres and mobile clinics provide timely medical care and health education, addressing health concerns and teaching self-care. This education improves sanitation practices and contributes to healthier living conditions during and after incarceration. A cleaner, healthier environment positively impacts mental health and morale, aiding rehabilitation and preparing women for successful reintegration into society. Access to medical care and education equips them to handle health challenges post-release, supporting a smoother transition and long-term well-being.

Social Equality: Eradication of untouchability and caste discrimination, promoting social justice. Working to eradicate untouchability and caste discrimination, and promoting social inclusiveness. Supporting legal and social reforms to ensure equal rights for women, minorities, and marginalized groups. Eradicating untouchability and caste discrimination ensures women in prison are treated with



dignity and respect, fostering a humane environment that supports their emotional well-being. Promoting social inclusiveness and addressing discrimination boosts the self-esteem and mental health of marginalized women. Legal and social reforms that ensure equal rights create a fairer prison system, offering better treatment and opportunities for all inmates. A prison environment that combats discrimination and supports social justice enhances rehabilitation, leading to better personal development and preparation for reintegration. Addressing caste discrimination and promoting social justice also provide women with equitable access to education, vocational training, and support services, helping them build skills and confidence for life after release. This fair and inclusive environment facilitates smoother reintegration by reducing stigma and biases.

Women's Upliftment: Empowerment of women through education, health care, and opportunities for economic independence. Creating and supporting self-help groups for women to enhance their economic and social status. Providing educational and vocational training programs tailored for women to improve their skills and opportunities. Tailored educational and vocational training equips women with skills that boost their employment prospects and self-sufficiency upon release, supporting their reintegration. Comprehensive health care addresses their physical and mental needs, enabling better engagement in rehabilitation programs. Self-help groups and economic opportunities promote financial stability and self-reliance, helping women develop entrepreneurial skills and income-generating activities. These groups also provide emotional support and enhance social networks, reducing isolation and improving confidence. Combining education, health care, and economic support creates a holistic system that aids in rehabilitation and prepares women in prison for a stable, productive life after incarceration.

Village Reconstruction: Comprehensive development of villages, including improvements in infrastructure, education, and health services. Implementing comprehensive development projects to improve infrastructure, education, and health in villages. Encouraging sustainable farming practices and organic farming to enhance agricultural productivity and environmental health. Enhanced village infrastructure and education offer women better access to vocational training and educational programs, boosting their employability upon release. Improved health services contribute to better physical and mental well-being, aiding their engagement in rehabilitation. Sustainable and organic farming practices provide new economic opportunities, enabling women to contribute to rural economies through cooperative farming or entrepreneurship. These practices also foster environmental awareness, promoting responsible economic activities. Better village infrastructure and services create a supportive



environment for reintegration, making transitions smoother. Overall, comprehensive village development empowers women by offering resources and support for personal growth and economic independence, helping them build a stable foundation for life after incarceration.

Environmental Conservation: Promotion of tree planting, soil conservation, and sustainable practices to protect natural resources. Organizing tree planting campaigns to combat deforestation and improve environmental conditions. Promoting practices to prevent soil erosion and maintain soil fertility. Participating in tree planting and soil conservation activities provides women in prison with practical skills in environmental management, which are valuable for future eco-friendly jobs or ventures. These activities improve physical health and mental well-being by fostering a sense of purpose. Learning sustainable methods raises awareness of environmental issues, which can be applied to personal and professional life, encouraging responsible behaviour. Engaging in environmental campaigns during incarceration helps build a positive identity and sense of community, aiding smoother reintegration into society. The skills and knowledge gained can be used to support environmental initiatives and sustainable practices in their communities after release.

Non-Violent Conflict Resolution: Advocacy for non-violent methods (ahimsa) for resolving conflicts and achieving. Supporting programs that promote non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliation within communities. Conducting workshops and training on non-violence and conflict resolution techniques. Workshops and training on non-violence and conflict resolution equip women with essential skills for peaceful conflict management. These skills foster personal growth, improve interactions within prison, and enhance future community relations. Practising non-violence helps women develop emotional control, reduce stress, and maintain a positive mindset. This improves relationships with inmates and staff, creating a harmonious environment that supports rehabilitation. Mastering conflict resolution techniques prepares women for effective dispute management in their future lives, aiding smoother reintegration and reducing reoffending. After release, trained women can contribute positively to their communities by promoting peaceful resolution and reconciliation.

Languages and Culture: Support for the development and use of local languages to preserve cultural heritage and facilitate education. Supporting the preservation and promotion of traditional arts, crafts, and cultural heritage. Encouraging the use and development of local languages in education and daily life. Promoting local languages and traditional arts helps women in prison stay connected to their cultural roots, boosting their identity and self-esteem. Integrating these languages into education makes learning more accessible and engaging, improving educational outcomes. Engaging in traditional crafts



and cultural activities offers constructive outlets for creativity and personal growth. Knowledge of local languages and cultural practices aids smoother reintegration into communities by bridging cultural gaps and enhancing communication. Supporting cultural preservation allows women to contribute to their communities' cultural richness and continuity, potentially leading to community service opportunities after release.

Improvement of Agriculture: Support for agricultural practices that enhance productivity and sustainability while benefiting small farmers. Training in advanced and sustainable agricultural practices equips women with practical skills applicable to farming. These skills can improve their employability and entrepreneurial prospects upon release. Knowledge of efficient and sustainable farming can lead to opportunities for women to engage in agricultural ventures or cooperatives, fostering economic independence. Learning about sustainable practices promotes environmental awareness and responsibility, which can enhance women's sense of purpose and well-being. Agricultural training provides a productive focus during incarceration and prepares women for a smoother reintegration into rural or agricultural communities, where these skills are in demand. By supporting small farmers and sustainable practices, women can contribute positively to their communities after release, helping to advance local agricultural productivity and environmental health.

Social Harmony: Encouragement of mutual respect and cooperation among different communities. Establishing and supporting cooperatives in various sectors to foster collective growth and mutual support. Creating cooperatives for consumers to ensure fair prices and quality goods. Participation in cooperatives equips women with practical skills in teamwork, management, and problem-solving, which are crucial for personal growth and future job prospects. Cooperatives offer opportunities for women to work across various sectors, promoting economic independence and supporting entrepreneurial goals upon release. Working in cooperative environments fosters mutual respect and cooperation, improving social interactions and emotional well-being, and preparing women for successful reintegration into society. Consumer cooperatives provide fair prices and quality goods, teaching women about financial management and business practices, which is useful for managing personal finances. Overall, experience in cooperatives offers a productive focus during incarceration, enhances skills in collaboration, and supports community engagement. Women with cooperative experience can positively impact their communities after release, contributing to collective growth and mutual support.



Economic Justice: Addressing economic disparities and promoting fair distribution of wealth and resources. Addressing economic disparities improves women's access to resources, training, and skill development, enhancing their prospects for economic independence upon release. Fair resource distribution ensures equal access to educational and vocational programs, leading to better job opportunities and personal growth. Programs targeting economic inequalities often include financial literacy and resource management training, helping women plan for a stable future. Promoting equity boosts emotional well-being and self-esteem, creating a supportive environment for rehabilitation. By addressing inequalities, women are better prepared for reintegration into society and can positively impact their communities by advocating for social equity and supporting efforts to reduce economic disparities.

Self-Governance and Local Autonomy: Promotion of self-governance at the village level, allowing communities to manage their affairs. Exposure to self-governance helps women develop leadership and administrative skills, aiding personal growth and future opportunities. It fosters empowerment, boosts self-esteem, and enhances confidence. Understanding community management facilitates smoother reintegration by improving connections with communities upon release. Experience in self-governance prepares women for leadership roles, allowing them to advocate for their needs and interests effectively. Overall, learning about self-governance provides a constructive focus during incarceration and equips women for active community participation after release.

Cultural Revival: Engaging in traditional arts and crafts helps women develop practical skills for future employment or Encouraging the revival and preservation of traditional arts, crafts, and cultural entrepreneurship. It promotes mental stimulation and emotional healing, enhancing overall well being. Reviving cultural practices fosters a sense of identity and boosts self-esteem. Learning these skills offers educational enrichment and personal growth. Experience in traditional arts prepares women for reintegration by providing a constructive outlet and potential career paths. After release, women can positively impact their communities by supporting cultural preservation and participating in local economic activities.

Youth Development: Programs aimed at the education, training, and empowerment of youth to become active and responsible citizens. Implementing programs to engage and empower young people through education, skills training, and community service. Offering leadership training and opportunities for youth to become active contributors to societal development. Educational and skills



training programs enhance women's employability and self-sufficiency upon release. Leadership and community service opportunities foster responsibility, personal growth, and confidence. These programs offer a constructive focus during incarceration, improving mental well-being and providing purpose. Leadership training equips women for active roles in society and effective community contribution. Overall, these experiences support smoother reintegration by preparing women to be responsible, active contributors to societal development.

Cooperative Endeavors: Encouragement of cooperative efforts in various sectors to foster collective growth and mutual support. Participation in cooperatives helps women develop teamwork, leadership, and management skills, which are valuable for personal growth and future employment. Cooperative efforts foster a sense of responsibility and mutual support, boosting self-esteem and confidence through active collaboration. Engaging in cooperative activities provides a positive focus during incarceration, promoting mental well-being and a sense of purpose. Experience in cooperatives prepares women for reintegration by equipping them with skills for community involvement and potential entrepreneurial ventures. Working in cooperatives enhances social connections and collaboration skills, aiding smoother reintegration into society by fostering a sense of belonging.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR PRISON REFORM: GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE

Restorative Justice Gandhiji believed in reconciliation and healing rather than retribution. Restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm caused by criminal behaviour through mediated dialogue between the victim and the offender. This approach fosters understanding, forgiveness, and resolution. Implementation: Create restorative justice programs within the prison system where offenders can meet with their victims, understand the impact of their actions, and take steps to make amends. Such programs have been shown to reduce recidivism and help victims heal. Humane Treatment and Rehabilitation. Gandhiji emphasized the importance of treating every individual with respect and dignity. Prisons should focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment, providing inmates with education, vocational training, and psychological support. Implementation: Enhance educational and vocational training programs to prepare inmates for reintegration into society. Provide adequate mental health services and counselling to address the psychological needs of prisoners. Non-Violent Discipline Non-violence (ahimsa) is a core Gandhian principle. The prison environment should minimize the use of force and instead employ non-violent methods of discipline and conflict resolution. Implementation: Train prison staff in non-violent communication and conflict resolution techniques. Use positive reinforcement and restorative practices to manage inmate behaviour instead of punitive



measures like solitary confinement. Community Integration Gandhiji believed in the power of community and self-sufficiency. Prisons should facilitate programs that maintain and strengthen inmates' ties to their families and communities, as strong social support networks are crucial for successful reentry. Implementation: Establish community-based programs that allow inmates to participate in community service and engage with the outside world in a controlled manner. Promote family visitation and involve community volunteers in rehabilitation efforts. Focus on the Root Causes of Crime Addressing the socioeconomic factors that lead to criminal behaviour aligns with Gandhian ideals of social justice and equality. Efforts should be made to address poverty, lack of education, and unemployment, which are often root causes of crime. Implementation: Develop initiatives aimed at improving socio-economic conditions in communities with high crime rates. Implement preventive measures like education and employment programs targeted at at-risk populations. Empowerment and Self-Sufficiency Gandhiji promoted the idea of self-sufficiency and empowerment through self-reliance. Prisons should encourage inmates to take responsibility for their lives and futures. Implementation: Introduce programs that teach inmates skills like meditation, yoga, and other self-help practices that promote personal growth and self-discipline. Encourage entrepreneurial initiatives within prisons, where inmates can learn business skills and manage small projects. Transparency and Accountability a Gandhian approach emphasizes truth and transparency. The prison system should be transparent about its operations and held accountable for any mistreatment or abuse. Implementation: Establish independent oversight bodies to monitor prison conditions and investigate complaints. Ensure that data on prison conditions, inmate treatment, and outcomes of rehabilitative programs are publicly accessible (The Marshall Project; Wisconsin Watch).

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the complex issues related to women in development (WiD, WfD, WaD) and the economic and social challenges faced by women prisoners. Despite their significant contributions to economic growth, the roles of women are frequently undervalued and overlooked. Frameworks like WiD and WfD advocate for the integration of women into development programs, emphasizing their active participation in self-help groups and small-scale industries, especially within prison settings. Research highlights a strong correlation between women's empowerment and economic development, but barriers such as discriminatory laws and limited access to resources hinder progress. While women's economic participation is vital for overall development, many remain stuck in low-wage, low-skill jobs due to systemic inequalities. In India, many incarcerated women come from



marginalized backgrounds and experience socio-economic deprivation, domestic violence, and insufficient educational opportunities, all of which contribute to their involvement in crime. The National Expert Committee on Women Prisoners has put forward important recommendations aimed at improving conditions for incarcerated women, including enhancing legal awareness, providing appropriate medical care, and engaging voluntary organizations. The incarceration of women is a multifaceted issue deeply rooted in socio-economic challenges, domestic violence, and systemic inequalities. Often, women commit crimes out of desperation or coercion, underscoring the urgent need for gender-sensitive reforms that focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment. To create a more equitable justice system, it is essential to address the root causes of female criminality such as poverty, lack of education, and domestic abuse. Strengthening support systems, vocational training, and legal protections for women is crucial for their empowerment and successful reintegration into society. As society increasingly acknowledges the invaluable contributions of women, particularly those who are imprisoned, it is imperative to cultivate an environment that supports their rights and well-being, paving the way for sustainable development and gender equality. The Gandhian Constructive Programs provide a comprehensive framework for empowering women in prison, addressing their specific needs and facilitating their reintegration into society. By concentrating on key areas such as economic self-reliance, education, health, and social equality, these initiatives help cultivate essential skills for personal growth and independence. Through vocational training and cooperative efforts, women are empowered to enhance their employability and entrepreneurial prospects, while improvements in health and hygiene contribute to their overall well-being. Initiatives aimed at eradicating discrimination and fostering social justice create a more humane and equitable environment, which is vital for effective rehabilitation. Additionally, involving women in environmental conservation and cultural revival enriches their personal development and fosters a sense of community and responsibility. Programs that promote non-violent conflict resolution and self-governance further develop leadership skills, enabling women to make positive contributions to their communities. In summary, the holistic approach of these programs not only tackles the immediate challenges faced by women prisoners but also lays the groundwork for sustainable development and gender equality. By equipping them with the necessary skills and support, society can facilitate their successful reintegration, reduce recidivism, and enhance community well-being. Recognizing women's contributions and promoting their rights are crucial steps toward building a more inclusive and equitable society. Women are often seen as upholders of societal norms, yet over the past decade, many have engaged in criminal activities worldwide, including in India. Their crimes are not limited to petty offences; women are increasingly involved in serious and nontraditional crimes. Various economic, political, social, biological, and psychological factors



contribute to women's criminality. For instance, biological issues like hormonal imbalances can influence behaviour, particularly during pregnancy and menopause, leading to emotional fluctuations and impulsive actions (Paranjape, 2006). Domestic abuse from spouses or relatives can also push women toward crime. Personal factors such as lack of affection, spouses' vices like drinking and gambling, and poverty significantly contribute to female criminality, especially in India. Difficult life circumstances, relationship conflicts, and family discord further exacerbate this issue (Ahuja, 1969). Additionally, lack of education, social instability, poor living conditions, and challenging family dynamics are rising factors in women's criminal behaviour. As women increasingly enter the workforce and social spheres from which they were previously excluded, they gain opportunities to engage in crime similar to men (Gillin, 2005). Traditionally, women were involved in petty crimes like shoplifting and prostitution. However, they are now engaged in a wider range of criminal activities, including adultery, blackmail, drug trafficking, forgery, kidnapping, marital crimes, murder, pickpocketing, smuggling, terrorism, and theft. (Snehal Asthana 2020) Some effective measures for preventing female criminality in India include amending existing laws and implementing community-based crime prevention programs. Establishing crime prevention institutions at the community level and promoting interdisciplinary research on female criminality can further address the issue. Efforts should be made to combat gender discrimination in families, schools, and workplaces while learning and rehabilitation programs for female offenders can support their reformation. Reforming the criminal justice system and ensuring the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of women offenders are critical steps. Additionally, responsible media representation, comprehensive sex education, and promoting equal sharing of social and domestic responsibilities between men and women, rather than traditional role demarcation, are essential for long-term crime prevention.

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