

Women in Ancient Indian Philosophy and Gandhi: A Philosophical Study

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Abstract

This paper studies the position of women in ancient Indian philosophy and examines how Mahatma Gandhi reinterpreted this tradition in the twentieth century. The study does not only describe history but also analyzes philosophical ideas about women found in Vedic literature, the Upanishads, Dharmashastras like the Manusmṛti, and Śākta philosophy. Ancient Indian thought contains both ideas of equality and ideas of hierarchy. Women were sometimes respected as spiritual seekers and even as forms of divine power, but they were also restricted by social and legal rules.

The paper argues that this tension between spiritual equality and social inequality continued into modern times. Gandhi inherited this complex tradition. Through his ideas of ahimsa (nonviolence) and satyagraha (truth-force), he encouraged women to join public and political life. However, he also kept some traditional ideas about women's purity, sacrifice, and moral superiority.

The study concludes that Gandhi's understanding of women shows both continuity and change. His philosophy connects tradition with reform and spiritual respect with social activism.

Keywords

Ancient Indian Philosophy; Women in Vedic Period; Upanishads; Manusmṛti; Śakti; Mahatma Gandhi; Ahimsa; Satyagraha; Gender Equality; Social Reform; Spiritual Equality; Patriarchy

I. Introduction

The question of women's status in Indian intellectual history is one of the most complex and philosophically layered themes in South Asian studies. Indian civilization has produced a vast body of metaphysical reflection, ethical instruction, social legislation, devotional theology, and political philosophy. Within this broad landscape, the image of woman oscillates between sacred embodiment and social subordination, philosophical authority and domestic confinement, spiritual equality and legal dependency.

This study examines the position of women in ancient Indian philosophy and analyzes how **Mahatma Gandhi** reinterpreted this philosophical tradition in the twentieth century. Rather than presenting a purely historical survey, the paper undertakes a philosophical analysis of key concepts—ātman, dharma, śakti, ahimsa, and satyagraha—and explores how these ideas shaped understandings of gender.

Ancient Indian thought does not offer a single, unified doctrine about women. Instead, it presents multiple and sometimes contradictory perspectives. The Vedic hymns reveal women as participants in ritual and authors of sacred verses. The Upanishads elevate the Self beyond gender and portray women in metaphysical debates. The Dharmashastric tradition codifies hierarchical gender roles and social restrictions. Śākta philosophy glorifies the feminine as cosmic energy. These strands coexist, forming a complex intellectual heritage.

Gandhi inherited this layered tradition at a time when India was struggling for political independence and social reform. He drew from ancient sources but reframed them within his philosophy of nonviolence. His engagement with women was both transformative and constrained by traditional moral assumptions. This paper argues that the philosophical treatment of women in Indian thought is characterized by a persistent tension between metaphysical universality and social hierarchy. Gandhi's reinterpretation represents both continuity with tradition and ethical transformation. His philosophy stands at the intersection of spiritual reverence and political activism.

II. Review of Literature

The position of women in ancient Indian society and philosophy has been widely discussed by modern historians and scholars of religion. Early studies such as A. S. Altekar's *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* (1956) argued that women enjoyed a relatively high status during the Vedic period and that their condition gradually declined in later historical periods. Altekar emphasized the presence of learned women such as Lopāmudrā and Ghoṣā and pointed to their participation in religious rituals as evidence of early respect for women.

Later scholars, however, have offered more critical interpretations. Uma Chakravarti (2003), in her influential work *Gendering Caste*, argues that patriarchal structures became increasingly institutionalized through religious and legal texts such as the Dharmashastras. According to Chakravarti, these texts played an important role in shaping gender hierarchies and regulating women's roles within the family and society. Kumkum Roy (1999) has also examined the social history of women in early Indian societies and highlighted the complexity and diversity of women's experiences. Roy emphasizes that while certain elite women participated in intellectual and religious activities, the majority of women were constrained by social norms and economic structures.

Scholars of Indian philosophy have also discussed the symbolic importance of the feminine principle. Gavin Flood (1996) notes that Śākta traditions elevate the feminine as the ultimate cosmic power (Śakti), presenting a theological framework in which the divine feminine plays a central role in creation and transformation.

The views of Mahatma Gandhi on women have also received considerable scholarly attention. Gandhi supported women's participation in social reform and political movements while emphasizing moral strength and nonviolence. Some scholars view Gandhi as an important advocate for women's public participation, while others argue that his emphasis on feminine purity and sacrifice reflects traditional gender ideals.

This body of scholarship shows that the position of women in Indian intellectual history cannot be understood through a single perspective. Instead, it requires careful analysis of philosophical ideas, religious symbolism, and social institutions. The present study builds upon this scholarship by examining both ancient philosophical traditions and Gandhi's reinterpretation of them within the context of social reform.

Statement of the Problem

The position of women in Indian philosophical traditions has been a subject of significant debate and reflection. Ancient Indian texts present different and sometimes conflicting views about women's roles in society, religion, and philosophy. In some early traditions, women appear as participants in spiritual discussions and religious practices. However, in other texts, women are placed within a system that limits their social independence and authority. This creates an important philosophical problem regarding how these different perspectives can be understood within the broader framework of Indian thought.

The philosophical teachings found in the Vedas and the Upanishads often emphasize the idea that the ultimate reality or the Self is beyond physical differences such as gender. This concept suggests that all human beings share the same spiritual essence. However, when we examine later social and legal texts, we find that women were frequently placed under male authority and were given limited social freedom. This difference between philosophical ideals and social practices raises important questions about the relationship between spiritual equality and social hierarchy.

Another important issue arises in the interpretation of these traditions in the modern period. Mahatma Gandhi engaged deeply with Indian philosophical traditions and attempted to reinterpret them within the context of social reform and national struggle. Gandhi encouraged women to participate in public life and political movements, and he criticized many harmful social customs that restricted women. At the same time, some of his ideas continued to emphasize traditional feminine qualities such as patience, sacrifice, and moral purity. Because of these complexities, an important philosophical question emerges: whether Gandhi's views truly represent a transformation of traditional ideas about women or whether they simply reinterpret them within a modern framework. The tension between tradition and reform, spiritual ideals and social realities, forms the central problem of this study. By examining both ancient philosophical texts and Gandhi's thought, this research seeks to understand how ideas about women have developed and how they continue to influence discussions about equality and social justice.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To examine representations of women in early Indian philosophical traditions.
2. To analyze Vedic and Upanishadic perspectives on spiritual participation.
3. To study Dharmashastric formulations of gender hierarchy.
4. To explore Śākta theology and its concept of feminine cosmic energy.
5. To investigate Gandhi's reinterpretation of women's role in society.
6. To evaluate whether Gandhi's thought reflects continuity or transformation.
7. To analyze the relationship between metaphysical doctrines and social organization.

III. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative and analytical approach to examine the philosophical ideas about women in ancient Indian thought and in the writings of Mahatma Gandhi. The research is mainly based on textual and philosophical analysis of important classical and modern sources. Primary texts such as the *R̥gveda*, the Upanishads, the *Manusmṛti*, and Gandhi's works are studied carefully in order to understand how women are represented in different philosophical traditions. The analysis focuses on the meaning of key concepts and the way they shape social ideas about gender.

The study also applies conceptual analysis to examine important philosophical ideas such as *ātman*, *dharma*, *śakti*, *ahimsa*, and *satyagraha*. These concepts are interpreted in their philosophical context to understand their implications for women's status and social roles. Through this process, the research explores whether the metaphysical ideas of Indian philosophy support equality or reinforce hierarchy.

In addition, the research uses a comparative method. Ancient philosophical views about women are compared with Gandhi's interpretation in the modern period. This comparison helps to identify both similarities and differences between traditional thought and Gandhi's reformist ideas. It also shows how Gandhi reinterpreted older philosophical principles in order to address modern social issues.

Finally, the study considers the historical and cultural context of each text and philosophical tradition. Understanding the historical background helps avoid misunderstanding the intentions of ancient thinkers. By combining textual interpretation, conceptual analysis, and historical understanding, the research aims to present a balanced philosophical examination of women's position in ancient Indian philosophy and Gandhi's thought.

Women in the Vedic Period

The Vedic period represents the earliest phase of Indian civilization and religious thought. The main source of information about this period is the Vedic literature, especially the *R̥gveda*. From the available evidence, it appears that women in the Vedic period occupied a relatively respected position in society compared to many later periods. Although the society was generally patriarchal, women were not completely excluded from religious, intellectual, or social life.

Women in the Vedic age were allowed to participate in religious rituals and ceremonies. In many Vedic sacrifices, the presence of the wife was considered essential. Religious duties were often performed jointly by the husband and wife, which shows that marriage was viewed as a sacred partnership rather than a relationship of strict domination. The wife was regarded as the spiritual companion of the husband in performing religious obligations.

Another important feature of the Vedic period was the presence of learned women. Some women were recognized as *ṛṣikās*, or female seers, who composed hymns in the *R̥gveda*. Women such as Lopāmudrā, Ghosā, and Apālā are mentioned in the Vedic texts as contributors to sacred literature, indicating that women could participate in religious and intellectual life in early Vedic society (Altekar, 1956). Their participation indicates that women were capable of achieving spiritual knowledge and intellectual recognition. The presence of such figures suggests that education was not completely denied to women.

There is also evidence that women could receive education and take part in philosophical discussions. Certain texts mention women who were interested in knowledge and spiritual learning. This indicates that intellectual development was not considered entirely restricted to men during this early period.

Marriage was an important institution in Vedic society, but there are indications that women sometimes had the freedom to choose their husbands through practices similar to *swayamvara*. Women were respected as mothers and were regarded as important members of the household. The family structure was built on cooperation between husband and wife in managing domestic and religious responsibilities.

However, it is also important to note that Vedic society was not completely egalitarian. Political authority and leadership were mainly controlled by men, and the social structure remained patriarchal. While women enjoyed certain rights and respect, they did not possess the same level of power as men in public affairs.

From a philosophical perspective, the Vedic period reflects a stage in which women had a meaningful presence in religious and intellectual life, even though social power remained largely in male hands. This period therefore presents a picture of relative participation and partnership rather than strict exclusion. It forms an important foundation for understanding later developments in Indian philosophical and social thought regarding women.

Women in the Upanishads

The Upanishads represent an important stage in the development of Indian philosophy. Unlike the earlier Vedic texts, which mainly focus on rituals and sacrifices, the Upanishads emphasize philosophical inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality, the Self (*ātman*), and the meaning of life. In this intellectual environment, women appear not only as participants in religious life but also as seekers of philosophical knowledge.

One of the most significant examples of women in the Upanishadic tradition is the figure of Gargi Vachaknavi. She is described as a learned philosopher who participated in a famous debate in the court of King Janaka. During this discussion, Gargi questioned the sage Yājñavalkya about the ultimate basis of the universe. Her questions were deep and metaphysical, dealing with the nature of reality and the foundation of existence. The presence of Gargi in such a debate shows that women were capable of engaging in serious philosophical inquiry and were respected for their intellectual abilities.

Another important woman mentioned in the Upanishads is Maitreyī, who was the wife of Yājñavalkya. In a well-known dialogue, Yājñavalkya offered his property to his two wives before leaving home to pursue spiritual life. Maitreyī responded by asking whether wealth could bring immortality. When she was told that it could not, she expressed a desire for knowledge instead of material possessions. Yājñavalkya then explained the philosophical idea that the Self (ātman) is the ultimate reality and the source of true fulfillment. This dialogue shows that Maitreyī was deeply interested in spiritual knowledge and philosophical truth.

The teachings of the Upanishads also present an important philosophical idea about equality. According to these texts, the ātman is the true essence of every individual and is beyond all physical differences, including gender. Since the Self is not male or female, the philosophical teaching suggests that all human beings share the same spiritual nature. In principle, this idea supports the concept of spiritual equality between men and women.

However, even though the Upanishads present examples of learned women and emphasize the universality of the Self, social reality did not always fully reflect this philosophical ideal. Access to education and philosophical discussion was probably limited to a small number of women from learned families. The majority of women in society may not have had the same opportunities.

From a philosophical perspective, the Upanishadic period is important because it shows that women could participate in intellectual and spiritual discussions. At the same time, it also reveals a gap between philosophical teachings and social practice. The idea that the Self is beyond gender provides a powerful foundation for equality, but this ideal was not completely realized in the social structures of the time. Gargi's philosophical debate with Yājñavalkya in the court of King Janaka is recorded in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and demonstrates the presence of women in metaphysical discussions (Olivelle, 1996).

Dharmashastra and Social Rules

The Dharmashastra literature represents an important stage in the development of social and legal thought in ancient India. These texts were written to explain the rules of social behavior, religious duties, family life, and moral conduct. Among these texts, the *Manusmṛiti* is one of the most influential. Unlike the earlier Vedic and Upanishadic traditions, which focused more on spiritual knowledge and philosophical inquiry, the Dharmashastra texts are mainly concerned with maintaining social order and stability.

In the Dharmashastra tradition, society is organized according to clearly defined duties and responsibilities. Each individual is expected to follow certain rules based on their social position and stage of life. Within this system, women are given an important role in the family, but their independence is limited. The texts often emphasize that a woman should be protected by male members of her family. According to these rules, a woman is expected to be under the care of her father during childhood, her husband during youth, and her son during old age. This idea reflects the belief that women require guidance and protection throughout their lives.

The Dharmashastra texts also describe the ideal qualities of a woman. A good woman is portrayed as loyal, obedient, modest, and devoted to her husband and family. The wife is expected to maintain the household, support her husband, and raise children. Her virtue is closely connected with family honor and social stability. Because of this, great importance is given to chastity and fidelity.

At the same time, these texts express a form of respect for women. Women are sometimes described as sources of prosperity and happiness within the household. Certain passages suggest that where women are respected, the gods are pleased. However, this respect does not necessarily lead to social equality. Women may be honored in symbolic or moral language, but their legal and social authority remains limited.

From a philosophical point of view, the Dharmashastra tradition reflects a shift in emphasis from spiritual equality to social regulation. Earlier philosophical ideas, such as the Upanishadic teaching that the Self is beyond gender, are not the main focus in these legal texts. Instead, the priority is maintaining social harmony, family order, and continuity of lineage. In this context, gender roles become more clearly defined and hierarchical.

Therefore, the Dharmashastra literature plays a major role in shaping the traditional gender structure of Indian society. It establishes a system in which women are valued within the family but remain under male authority in social and legal matters. This development illustrates the growing gap between philosophical ideas about universal spiritual equality and the practical organization of social life. The *Manusmṛiti* famously states

that a woman should be under the protection of her father, husband, and son at different stages of life (Olivelle, 2005).

Śākta Philosophy and the Divine Feminine

Śākta philosophy represents one of the most powerful traditions in Indian religious and philosophical thought. In this tradition, the ultimate reality of the universe is understood as **Śakti**, which means divine energy or cosmic power. Unlike many other philosophical traditions where the ultimate reality is described mainly in masculine terms, Śākta philosophy places the feminine principle at the center of the universe. The entire cosmos is believed to function through this dynamic and creative energy.

In Śākta philosophy, the divine feminine is not simply a symbolic figure but the fundamental power behind creation, preservation, and destruction. The universe is understood as the manifestation of this cosmic energy. Without Śakti, nothing in the universe can exist or function. Even the god Śiva, who is often seen as the supreme consciousness, is described as inactive without the presence of Śakti. This idea expresses the deep philosophical belief that energy and consciousness must work together for creation to take place.

The divine feminine is worshipped through many forms of goddesses. Goddesses such as Durga, Kali, and Lakshmi represent different aspects of cosmic power. Durga symbolizes strength and protection, Kali represents transformation and destruction of evil, and Lakshmi is associated with prosperity and well-being. Through these forms, the feminine is seen as the source of both nurturing care and powerful energy.

From a philosophical perspective, Śākta thought gives great importance to the creative and dynamic nature of reality. The universe is not viewed as static but as constantly moving and evolving through the power of Śakti. This idea elevates the feminine principle to the highest level of metaphysical importance. The divine feminine is therefore not secondary or dependent but is the very foundation of existence.

At the same time, the presence of such strong goddess traditions creates an interesting philosophical question. Even though the feminine principle is highly respected in religious symbolism, this respect did not always lead to complete social equality for women in everyday life. The worship of powerful goddesses existed alongside social systems that were often patriarchal. This contrast shows that symbolic reverence for the feminine does not automatically transform social structures.

Despite this contradiction, Śākta philosophy remains an important example of how Indian thought recognizes the creative and sustaining power of the feminine. It presents a vision of reality in which the feminine is not weak or secondary but is the ultimate energy that supports the entire universe. For many philosophers and scholars, this tradition offers an important resource for rethinking the relationship between spirituality, power, and gender in Indian philosophy. Scholars of Hindu traditions note that Śākta philosophy elevates the feminine principle to the level of ultimate cosmic power (Flood, 1996).

Gandhi's Historical Background

Mahatma Gandhi lived during British colonial rule. At that time, many social reform movements were already working for women's education and rights.

Gandhi was influenced by Hindu scriptures, Jain ideas of nonviolence, and Christian ethics. He believed in truth and moral strength.

Women played an important role in his freedom movement. He encouraged them to join protests and political action.

Gandhi's View of Women

The views of Mahatma Gandhi on women were deeply connected with his broader philosophy of morality, nonviolence, and social reform. Gandhi believed that women possessed great moral strength and spiritual power. In his opinion, true strength did not lie in physical force but in courage, patience, and the ability to endure suffering. Because of these qualities, he often argued that women were naturally suited to practice nonviolence and play an important role in social transformation.

Gandhi strongly opposed many social customs that restricted women's freedom and dignity. He criticized practices such as child marriage, purdah, and the denial of education to women. He believed that women should receive proper education and should have the opportunity to develop their intellectual and moral abilities. Gandhi also supported the idea that women should participate in public life rather than remain limited to the domestic sphere.

During the Indian freedom movement, Gandhi actively encouraged women to take part in political activities. He believed that women could become powerful agents of change through nonviolent action. Many women participated in movements such as civil disobedience, the boycott of foreign goods, and the promotion of khadi. Through these activities, women became visible participants in the national struggle for independence. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, or *ahimsa*, played an important role in shaping his understanding of women. He believed that women were naturally inclined toward compassion, patience, and sacrifice. According

to him, these qualities made women especially capable of practicing nonviolent resistance. In his view, the moral courage of women could challenge injustice without using violence. This belief led him to encourage women to join movements based on truth and nonviolent protest.

At the same time, Gandhi's ideas about women also reflected certain traditional assumptions. Although he supported equality in dignity and moral worth, he sometimes emphasized differences between men and women. Gandhi believed that men and women had different roles in society and that women possessed special qualities such as purity, self-sacrifice, and nurturing care. Because of this, he often described women as the moral guardians of the family and society.

This perspective has been discussed and debated by many modern scholars. Some believe that Gandhi's ideas helped empower women by giving them an important role in public and political life. Others argue that his emphasis on feminine sacrifice and moral superiority may have reinforced traditional expectations placed upon women.

Despite these debates, Gandhi's contribution to the discussion of women's role in society remains significant. He challenged many social injustices and opened new opportunities for women to participate in political and social movements. His reinterpretation of strength as moral courage allowed women to become central figures in the struggle for justice and independence. Through this approach, Gandhi helped reshape the relationship between gender, power, and social change in modern Indian thought. Gandhi wrote that "woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities" (Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24).

Ahimsa and Redefinition of Power

Traditionally, power implied physical dominance. Gandhi redefined strength as ethical steadfastness. This transformation opened space for women in political action. Nonviolence became a field where moral resolve outweighed physical strength. However, by associating women strongly with self-sacrifice, Gandhi risked essentializing femininity.

Education and Social Reform

Mahatma Gandhi believed that education was one of the most important tools for improving the condition of women in society. According to him, women should not remain confined only to household duties but should also develop their intellectual and moral abilities. Gandhi argued that when women receive proper education, they become more capable of contributing to both family life and social progress. Education, in his view, was not only about gaining knowledge but also about building character, discipline, and a sense of social responsibility.

Gandhi strongly opposed social practices that harmed women and limited their freedom. He criticized customs such as child marriage, the purdah system, and the denial of educational opportunities to girls. He believed that these practices were unjust and prevented women from realizing their full potential. Gandhi encouraged society to reform these traditions and create conditions where women could live with dignity and self-respect.

At the same time, Gandhi promoted the idea of economic independence for women. He encouraged women to take part in productive activities such as spinning and weaving khadi. These activities were not only symbolic acts in the struggle against colonial rule but also ways to provide women with economic participation. Through such efforts, Gandhi hoped to strengthen women's confidence and independence within society.

Education and social reform, therefore, became important aspects of Gandhi's efforts to improve the status of women. He believed that when women are educated and respected, society as a whole becomes morally stronger and more just.

Continuity and Transformation

Gandhi's ideas about women show both continuity with traditional Indian thought and significant transformation. On one hand, he accepted several traditional values such as self-discipline, moral purity, and devotion to family life. These ideas had long been emphasized in Indian religious and philosophical traditions. Gandhi believed that these moral qualities were valuable and should continue to guide human life.

At the same time, Gandhi introduced an important transformation by encouraging women to participate actively in public and political life. Traditionally, women were often expected to remain mainly within the domestic sphere. Gandhi challenged this idea by inviting women to join national movements and social reform activities. Women became participants in protests, campaigns for self-reliance, and movements for social justice.

Another important transformation in Gandhi's thought was his reinterpretation of strength. In many traditional views, strength was associated with physical power and authority. Gandhi redefined strength as moral courage, truthfulness, and the ability to resist injustice without violence. Through this reinterpretation, women's qualities such as patience and endurance were seen as sources of power rather than weakness.

Thus, Gandhi's thought reflects a balance between preserving certain moral traditions and introducing new social possibilities for women. He did not completely reject the past but attempted to reinterpret it in ways that supported social change.

Philosophical Evaluation

From a philosophical perspective, Gandhi's ideas about women raise several important questions about equality, morality, and social roles. One of the strengths of his philosophy is that it challenges the idea that power must be based on violence or domination. By emphasizing moral courage and nonviolence, Gandhi created a framework in which women could become powerful participants in social and political movements.

Gandhi's philosophy also highlights the importance of dignity and respect for women. His criticism of harmful customs and his support for education helped open new opportunities for women in modern Indian society. Through his leadership in social and political movements, many women gained the confidence to take active roles outside the home.

However, some philosophers and modern feminist thinkers have also pointed out certain limitations in Gandhi's ideas. Gandhi often described women as naturally more patient, compassionate, and self-sacrificing than men. While this description recognizes positive qualities, it can also create expectations that women should always behave in selfless and sacrificial ways. Such expectations may unintentionally reinforce traditional gender roles.

Because of this, Gandhi's philosophy can be understood as both progressive and limited. It promotes dignity and participation for women, but it also continues to reflect some traditional assumptions about gender differences. This combination of reform and tradition makes Gandhi's thought complex and open to different interpretations. Another important philosophical issue concerns the relationship between symbolic reverence and social reality. Indian religious traditions often glorify the feminine principle through goddess worship and the concept of Sakti. However, this symbolic elevation of the feminine does not always translate into social equality for women. The contrast between powerful goddesses and restricted social roles for women illustrates the complex relationship between metaphysical ideas and social institutions. This tension has been widely discussed in modern feminist interpretations of Indian philosophy, which seek to understand how religious symbolism can both challenge and reinforce patriarchal structures.

IV. Conclusion

The study of women in ancient Indian philosophy and Gandhi's thought reveals a long and complex intellectual history. Early Indian philosophical traditions contained different and sometimes contradictory ideas about women. In some texts, women appear as participants in religious rituals and philosophical discussions, while in other contexts they are placed within hierarchical social structures.

Gandhi inherited this complex philosophical tradition and attempted to reinterpret it in the modern context. Through his philosophy of nonviolence and moral courage, he encouraged women to participate in social reform and political movements. His ideas helped expand the public role of women and challenged many unjust social practices.

At the same time, Gandhi's views also reflected certain traditional beliefs about feminine virtues and social roles. Because of this, his philosophy represents both continuity with the past and transformation toward a more inclusive society.

The discussion of women in Indian philosophy therefore raises deeper philosophical questions about the relationship between spiritual ideas and social reality. It invites reflection on how concepts such as equality, dignity, and moral responsibility can shape social institutions. By examining both ancient philosophical traditions and Gandhi's reinterpretation of them, we gain a clearer understanding of how ideas about gender, power, and justice have developed within Indian intellectual history.

In contemporary discussions of gender equality, the philosophical traditions of India continue to provide important resources for reflection. Concepts such as the universality of the Self, the dynamic power of Śakti, and the ethical commitment to nonviolence can be reinterpreted in ways that support greater social justice. Gandhi's thought represents an important attempt to bridge ancient philosophical insights with modern struggles for equality. By examining these traditions critically, it becomes possible to develop a deeper understanding of how philosophical ideas can influence social transformation.

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