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Contribution Of The Gandhian Philosophy Towards Society And Social Reforms

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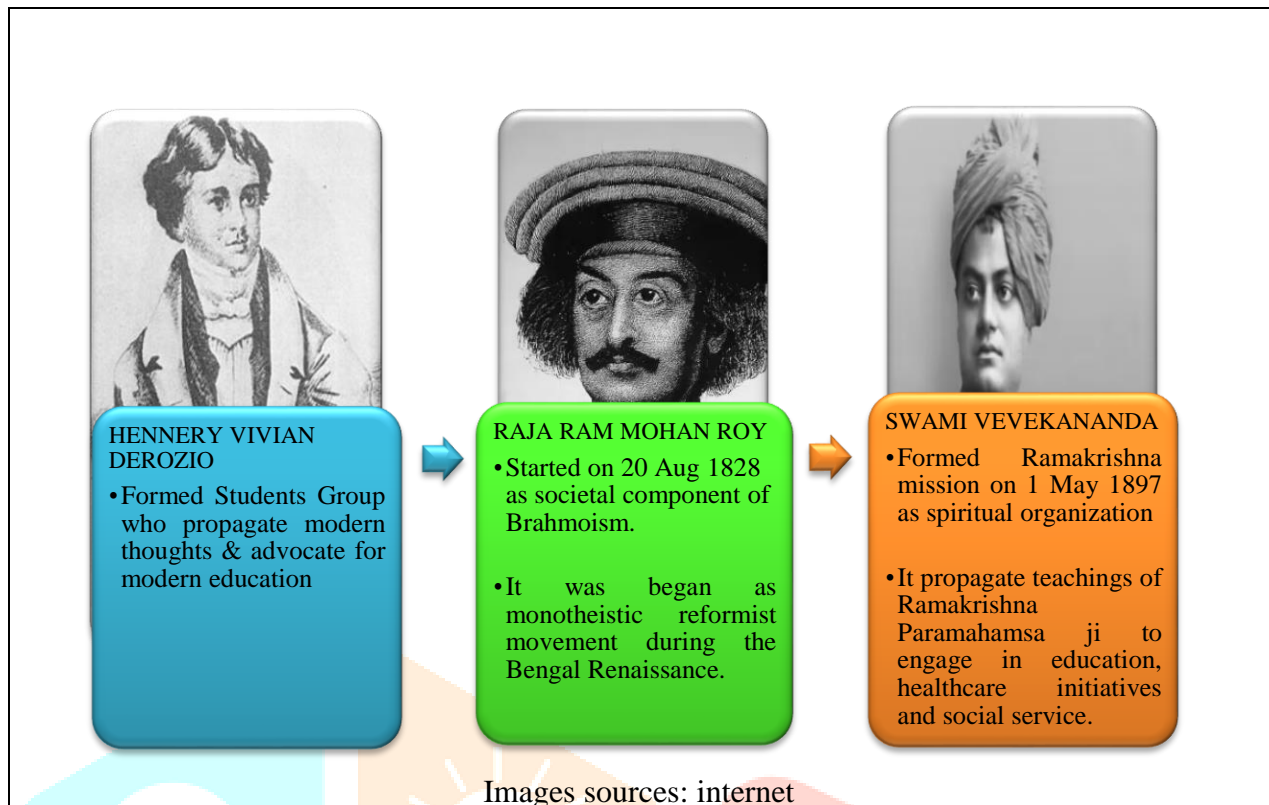
Abstract: Gandhiji was one among the most inspiring leaders which was accepted widely not only by the people of pre-independent India but also by the people of other countries. Indeed, the Gandhiji has earned huge popularity after the country became independent. The philosophy of the great Gandhiji was relevant during his lifetime, after their death and even until today, its importance has not been ignored. On political awakening in the country, the social work, society and social engagement started becoming the part of educated and common masses. With this social-economic awakening, the people started connecting with the social work and related activities. Gandhiji being most influential leaders earned great reputation worldwide in order to lift the life of the common people of the country. Thus, it may be appropriate to agree that many of the political icons keep themselves involving into social work and related societal activities which ultimately could bring revolutions and simultaneously it would encompass the political, socio-economic and spiritual areas.

1. SOCIAL REFORMS THROUGH LEADERS

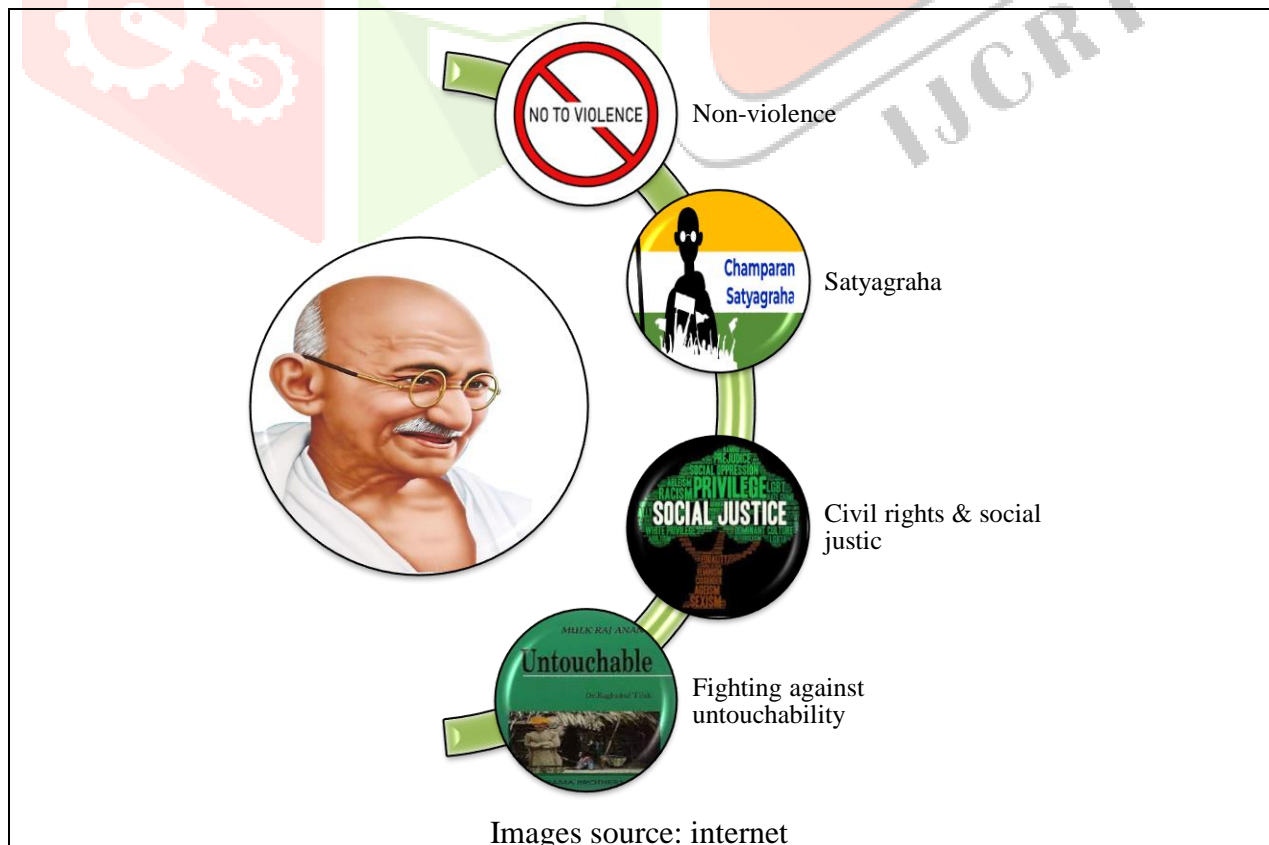
Social reforms across the globe were crucial and it actually began before the awakening of political inspiration by the leaders. In this series, it has been evident that journalism played a pivotal role and social-political awakening marked a prominent place. Articles, news and other social awakening started inspiring the general masses. During 19th century, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (RRMR) emerged as stalwarts which was related with religious pandemonium. RRMR was from *Brahmo Samaj* and propagated his ideas viz., curtailment of *sati pratha*, child marriage and widow's remarriage. He also highlights the value of western education and supported for the rights of the women's. In the series, some other national personalities such as; Byramji Malabari, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Jyoti Phule, Madan Mohan Malviya and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade fervently promoted for social livings and eventually fetch the reforms for the betterment of the society.

Widow remarriage, women's right and education, *sati pratha*, untouchability, and religious reforms were observed to be the most important issues. These leaders, NGOs, organizations, society's influential people tried to resolve such bad practices from the society. Such cruel issues were not only hit by the individual level but also at the level of institutions and as a process 'national social conference' was formed and its settings were also held parallel with the congress sessions. These great leaders put themselves to usher the common masses towards progressive approach for the society through spiritual and religious means.

The contributions towards the society by some of the leaders are given below:



Gandhiji was not only considered as revolutionary but was visionary, as well. Basically some of the Revolutionaries preferred to modify the system but the future planning vision could not be possessed. Gandhiji was different from other revolutionaries because he does always have an alternative solution against every evil practices in the society. Gandhiji's vision consists some of the important aspects, such as; removal of exploitation from the society, minimum governance and initiation of constructive programmes for the betterment of the civil society. The contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to the Indian society is given below:



Due to government's fear that orthodox masses of the society may not readily accept such social reforms, it was left for the socio-political leaders to carry on the social-economic reforms. Slowly, it was become the part of the political agenda for social reforms and political freedom. In 20th century, the political leaders and imminent personalities played pivotal role in the religious and communities reforms. As a result, gurudwara and temple reforms were some of the important parts. Apart from this, the journalism and newspapers were also some of the important medium wherein the imminent leaders, such as; Mahatma Gandhiji, Bal Gangadhar Tilk and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad educate for the social reforms to the common masses.

Go into deep, try to understand the problem of the masses and put best efforts for the amicable solution of the problem was inherent quality possessed by the Gandhiji. By love and affection of the people, he achieved the title of '*bapu*' and also recognize as 'father of the nation'. Gandhiji also known for rural development and self-reliance initiatives. The principles of *swaraj* and *swadeshi* was found resonance in contemporary strengths for rural development and self-reliance in India. Gram *Swaraj* model which was advocated by gandhiji has influenced various initiatives for empowerment of rural communities in India. Barefoot College, Rajasthan which was established by Bunker Roy, eventually embodies gandhian ideals by way of empowerment of rural communities through sustainable technologies, skill development and education.

3. CONTRIBUTION OF GHANDHIJI IN NATION BUILDING AND SOCIAL REFORMS

It was the efforts of the '*bapu*' to advocate for complete independence then the political freedom. Freedom of each unit or individual is the basic of complete freedom which will further recognized as '*poorna swaraj*' by theory of non-violence. Gandhiji advocated for multi-dimensional aspects of socio-economic-political and embraces the lives of common masses across creed, gender, colour and caste. Gandhian philosophical development was much influenced by other religions, nations and experiences due his deep exposure. Gandhi's philosophical development was strongly influenced by his extensive exposure to other nations, religions, and experiences. Gandhiji's beliefs was based as a mosaic of spiritual, ethical and principles of politics which was inspired by the wisdoms of Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism and subsequently some western thinkers viz; Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau. '*Bapu's*' main ideology was stunned around '*Ahimsa*', which is recognized as 'non-violence'. Some of the crucial constructive programmes and contribution of gandhiji is described hereunder:

- (a) **Communal Harmony:** Religion, beliefs and faith of the individual should have been the private affairs of an individual and therefore it is essentials of the social fabric to know each other with moral and values and not from communal characteristics. It was the gandhian philosophy to display as to how the democracy will act upon when the political leaders are not reactionary and made investment of power in them by a set up personalities to a good use. Gandhiji advocated for the democracy and social reforms for the betterment of the common masses.
- (b) **Khadi:** It may not be incorrect to state that gandhiji laid emphasis on khadi and '*swadeshi*' movement. Use of khadi in all spheres of life, promotion and production of khadi through labour and villager's intellect was key factors of gandhian philosophy. Production of khadi through village level was occupied a prominent place in the economic growth of the country and simultaneously it promotes a sense of proud to work independently. Gandhiji put khadi in central place whereby its mandate was not only self-sufficiency but also to proceed for the social reforms through non-violence medium and taking along with village industries, workmanship among villagers, economic autonomy and proud movement to be a part of the identity.

The khadi movement of the gandhiji was occupied prime place in the same way, where the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi promotes 'Skill India Mission' for the betterment of the common masses.

- (c) **Fight against Untouchability:** Gandhiji was against the untouchability and it has been found to be the evil for the society. It was advocated that such bad practices should be eliminated from the civic society and this curse needs to be addressed effectively. Appeal was made before the nation for fully removal of this practice as it is the way to disaster of Hinduism.

- (d) **Sanitation:** It was the dream of gandhiji that village community converting into graceful hamlets. There should not be any place for the dirty and stinking holes. It was the dream of 'bapu' that every should be neat and clear. It was mentioned in various books and placed that gandhiji himself cleaned-up his place and cloths. It was the gandhian philosophy wherein he believes that dignity of labour can only be recognized in true sense, if all citizens of the country started performing our daily activities at our own without depending on others. Parallel to the gandhiji's vision, the Government of India launched 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' on 02 October, 2014 to eliminate wastes and create defecation free villages, which has been turned into a great success for the country.
- (e) **Liquor Prohibition:** The father of the nation strongly advocated for the prohibition of liquor, as it is the worst evil in the society. The alcohol consumption is one among the bad habits, which negatively affected society. In order to overcome the alcohol consumption, gandhian philosophy was to open the recreation centre for the labourers so that after their work hours, they may relax a bit instead of taking liquor. Students and women has been described as one of the most effective tools to control the addictive.
- (f) **Role of Village Industry:** Gandhiji was of the view that villages are playing pivotal role in constructive programmes of the country and it can be completed after resurrection of the village level industries. Khadi '*udiyog*' has been recognized much and in order to maintain work harmony in khadi industries, village level industries such as; match-making, oil-pressing, paper-making, soap-making, hand-pounding are essential to grow.
- (g) **Education Policy:** Gandhiji envisaged for a new educational policy. This policy should not be focused on modern science and social science disciplines but eventually it should comprise of multi-lingual media, traditional learning and also the de-nova approach for holistic exploration of pupils. It was the view to transform the village children into model villagers. Children were expected to be rooted to the soil with future glorious vision for the country. Women education was also advocated vehemently with the vision that the role of women's in the society can be increased. The women were also encouraged to participate in the national movement with all vigor and strength. Equal status of women in the society was also advocated.
- (h) **Health & Hygiene:** The healthy mind is essential for the healthy body which ushered us the connection between mind and body. Health mind always encouraged for better things and therefore the health and hygiene are advocated. Gandhiji was of the view that personal hygiene and cleanliness is important but is more desirable that our surrounding should be supplemented by the sanitation so that constructive programmes can also be ensured. Apart from this, culture and language are also advocated for the better society.
- (i) **Role of Students:** Gandhiji saw the students as the hope of the nation and their positive attitude towards nation building is utmost important. The students were encouraged to participate in the freedom movement activities but it has also been advised not to entangle in the politics. As per gandhian philosophy, the students are important activities of the society and they cannot be kept away from the developing parts of the society and national building constructive programmes. Apart from students' participation in the nation building, 'bapu' advocated for the essential participation of '*adivasis*' as well. It has also been advocated the role of 'kisans', laborers and other downtrodden segments of the society in the nation building.
- (j) **Economic Equality:** Gandhiji advocated the doctrine of trusteeship theory for the solution and always laid emphasis on non-violence instead of bloody revolution. Economic equality is one of the most important factors which mark the merit of complete freedom. In order to eradicate the unequal distribution of wealth between different classes, it is important to maximize the equality in economic sphere across all verticals.

4. CONCLUSION

Gandhiji believed that constructive programmes are the embodiment of freedom which is actually in true sense. Therefore, the important of freedom can be much bigger if such constructive activities are bringing from every level in the society. Gandhian philosophy laid emphasis to achieve emancipation by way of non-violence and it also kept away from all sort of suppression and equality without having any conflict. The citizens of the country make themselves aware of them inherit rights and subsequently duties and further to enable them to achieve the desired results. Empowerment of the common masses is the main objective of this philosophy.

Gandhiji advocated for all round development of the citizens and through this theory he tried to reach the people in different parts of the country. In 1940, he said in the speech at '*Gandhi Sewa Sangh*' meeting – "I was born for the constructive programme; it is part of my soul. Politics is a kind of botheration for me". He believed the philosophy of non-violence and constructive activities which was with sync with rules and its nature. As part of principles, he was against greed and consumerism which further led to crony capitalism, violence and inequality. Gandhiji's philosophy still relevant even in the present day, as his theoretical and constructive approaches solves many problems of the common masses. Some of the live problems of today such as; environment degradation, climate changes, poverty and inequality at various levels across the society are few issues which still can be addressed at least partially by mere adoption of gandhiji's approach. This approach is as powerful as it envisages the empowerment of common masses, democratic participation and emancipation from different sorts of suppression and destitution.

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