

SOCIAL THOUGHTS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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Abstract:

Mahatma Gandhi is known to the world because of his active participation in the Indian freedom movement. It was the reason he got connected to all members of society. Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi have philosophical base and moral in nature. His dream was to build a new society where there will not be any place for evil things such as war and violence. His attention went towards those evils of society, due to which base of entire society had become hollow. His main aim was to make free our nation from the brutal clutches of British government but he was true social engineer too so simultaneously he also contributed against the problems of Indian women and for untouchables too. Mahatma Gandhi is also known as social reformer on the global level because he protested against policies of segregation in South Africa around 1905. His such passive resistance movement commenced civil rights movement throughout the world. With this research paper I want to throw the light on Social thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and his idealistic philosophy. This research paper contains Mahatma Gandhi's efforts towards eradication of social evils such as untouchability, child marriage, widow remarriage, purdah system, polygamy, dowry system etc.

Key Words:

Women Problems, empowerment, widow remarriage, Social reformer, segregation, child marriage, untouchables, global leader, injustice etc.

Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi, the well-known social reformer was born on 2nd October 1869 in Porbandar in Gujarat state. Karamchand Gandhi and Putalibai were his parents. He was like other Indian children born in ordinary background. Yet he was not an ordinary child in terms of his achievements. He fought against mighty empire without weapons and made his country free from British government. With this his social efforts and simple lifestyle made him to be called Mahatma, the Great soul. He married to Kasturabai Makhanji Kapadia at the age of 13. He went to England in 1888 to study law after the death of his father Karamchand Gandhi. Before going to London he gave promise to his mother to be non vegetarian and non alcoholic in his life. His brother Laxmidas supported him for his further study in London. After completion of his study in England, he returned to India in the year 1891. He started practicing as a lawyer in Rajkot. After this he went to South Africa in 1893 to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit. He was in South Africa for 21 years. In South Africa he started movement for civil rights which was non violent which made him a Global Leader. In 1915, he came again to India and started to organize peasants, farmers and labourers to protest against land tax and discrimination too.

In the year 1919 he became pro active leader of Indian freedom movement. He fought against British government and social evils with the help of his own moral principles. In 1922 he

was sentenced to six years imprisonment as a result of his non co-operation movement against British government. In the year 1930 he started movement to break an unhuman ‘Salt law’ which was one of the remarkable in the history of Indian freedom movement. Mahatma Gandhi was aware of social structure of nation so it was his firm belief that discrimination in society is one of the obstacles in attaining freedom from British government. Indian politics and Indian society were two different poles which would have tear down one another. After studying his efforts for social welfare, we can reasonably claim that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest soul was a man of virtues and moral values and pursued his goals throughout his life by following the path of non-violence.

Man a social animal

Aristotle, the great philosopher stated that the man is by nature a social animal and individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Mahatma Gandhi’s social philosophy was a truly inspired by Aristotle. He was very keen towards the society. He wanted to create a society free from all evils i.e discrimination, exploitation etc. He termed his ideal society as a ‘Ramrajya’ It means the kingdom of Lord on earth which is free from all evils. He wrote in his weekly ‘Harijan’: there will be neither paupers, nor beggars, neither high, nor low, neither millionaire employers, nor self-starved employees, neither intoxicating drinks, nor drugs. There will be the same respect for women. His vision of ideal society is a non-violent and democratic in which there is a true balance between individual freedom and a social responsibility. He gave highest priority to ideals in human life. According to him life has no meaning without ideals. He was visionary person as far as ideal society was concern which was reflected from his love for the simple life. His thoughts regarding this subjects are mentioned in his book ‘Hind Swaraj’.

Women Empowerment:

According to Mahatma Gandhi Indian women have been suppressed and under law and custom and for this situation male dominant society is responsible. Women of India have been taught to treat themselves as a slaves of men and society. So women should know their status and should play their role equals to men. Gandhi was aware about the real condition of women so his view regarding women was not as ‘object of reform’ but as a ‘self-conscious entity’. Participation of women in Indian freedom movement made them an important figure of Indian society which was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. He encouraged women’s participation in Satyagraha and social programs. He knew the natural strength and power of women so he praised Indian women in a way that though she is a weak in striking, she is strong in suffering, so they must participate in Indian freedom movement due to having such an exceptional power. He described women as the embodiment of a ahimsa (nonviolence) and sacrifice. With this he stated that “A daughter’s share must be equal to that of son” He said that to call women weaker was libel and injustice to them. It was his firm belief that strength means moral power so women are superior to men. He raised his voice for women’s right and his approach was feminist in nature. He opposed evil customs, homicide,

infanticide, child marriage and other inhuman practices of society. His efforts and struggle for women right became an ideal footsteps for other social reformer of India even after independence.

Child Marriage:

Mahatma Gandhi was against the evil practice of child marriage. According to him child marriage was an inhuman and immoral act as well. He opposed the thought that child marriage has religious sanction. It was his view that child widows are the byproduct of child marriage and child marriage is a sin and an inhuman act. He wrote, ‘it is a crime against God and man too to call the union of children a married state and then to decree widowhood for girl whose so called husband is dead’. He believed that there is no real upliftment of woman without bringing changes in marriage system. Most of the problems of women rooted in marriage institutions. Widowhood was the major problem and concerning issue for all social reformers in pre-independent era which was completely an outcome of denial of right to remarriage. Opening of special institutions like Mahila Ashrama for rescuing girls who wear the victims of evil practices and sold by their parents for the sake of money. He supported women education to life women from the well of social evils to create an ideal society where there would not be place for social evils.

Caste System:

In the year 1933, Gandhi thought of untouchability as a social evil and felt it is necessary to abolish the caste system to make an ideal society where there will not be any place for injustice in terms of human capabilities. Untouchability was the major concerning problem for him in those days. He did not believe in rebirth, so he said, “ if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable so that I may feel their problems. According to him ‘Varna system’ assigns duties and not the rights. He believed that Varna system of distribution of occupation was functional to the society. According to him the occupations were hierarchical and fruits of labour were identical irrespective to the Varna. He called untouchables as Harijan or children of God and efforted for their liberation. He started Satyagraha to secure the entry of untouchables into temples, tanks, roads and access to public wells and schools. In order to provide dignity to the work of the sweepers he himself took up the task of cleaning toilets. Untouchability is a religious issue was the belief of Mahatma Gandhi. So he sought to abolish this custom of untouchability and not the caste system. According to him no any Varna has superiority over the others. Every varna should be treated equal and important so that cast discrimination will be abolished and equality can be sustained in the society. He also strongly convinced Indian National Congress party to support and include his idea of removal untouchability from society to achieve the dream of social equality.

Education and Social Upliftment:

According to him providing education up to the root of society is much needed to create an ideal society which will be free from social evils and discriminations. He did not consider only literacy as education. In his words “ literacy is not the end of the education nor even the

beginning, it is only one of the means whereby men and women can be educated. He opined that education should effect humanbeings mind,soul and heart.

According to him the aim of education should be both individual and social development.He was a true utopian. He tried to bring ‘Ramrajya’ on the earth. For this his strongly supported the spread of education up to the last human being of society. He believed education as a mean of all-round development of individual to create ideal society. He also said that education is essential for the attainment of goal of peace even in social struggle of individual

Conclusion:

Mahatma Gandhi a lawyer, politician social activist and writer who fought for gaining freedom from British had also his keen eye on a social reform and upliftment. He appeared as a source of inspiration for deprived people of Indian society. Social discrimination was his concerning issue and he fought against it throughout his life. His fight and continuous efforts against social evils made him a true social reformer and a source of inspiration for those who wants to create an ideal society dependent on the merits of individual.Right from the beginning, he was strong advocate of deprived people and shown his special concern towards untouchables and women. His dream was to create ‘Ramrajya’ in society was based on equal opportunities irrespective of different in color, cast religion, gender and creed. He coined a special term ‘Harijan’ which shows his special concern towards upliftment of untouchables.His efforts for women’s social emancipation him legend. With the help of his ideas,principles and inspiration women fought a battle for their rights all over the world. So in a true sense, he is a true global social reformer.

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