

Role of Inspirational Political Leaders in Bringing Social and Political Change

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Abstract

Some of the Indian political leaders have contributed very significantly in bringing the social and political changes in society. Their life stories have proved to be inspiring for the successive generations. These personalities have worked very diligently towards social reforms and ensured progress and development of not only their regions but of nation as a whole. Through their social movements, new techniques were evolved against the social and political problems prevailing in society. Some of the leaders believed in Gandhian philosophy and advocated political decentralization for the active participation of people in political decision making. Despite of being imprisoned these leaders fearlessly served the nation wholeheartedly. These revolutionary leaders have contributed immensely in Indian politics through their revolutionary philosophy and actions.

Keywords: Gandhian philosophy, Indian political leaders, Indian politics, revolutionary philosophy

Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia

Rajmata Scindia has been accorded as woman icon for her historical personality. She took part in the freedom struggle of India at a very young age. Very diligently she worked towards social reforms and ensured progress and development of Gwalior and Madhya Pradesh. In her autobiography she narrates, that due to her dedication for the welfare of people and political commitments she spared very little time for family.

She played an active role in the establishment of the BJP and changed the direction of the politics of central India. She was so dedicated for the development of *Jan Sangh* in the state that when her son Madhavrao Scindia decided to join congress, she maintained distance from him. The rift between Rajmata and Madhavrao Scindia became so wide that she asked for a rent from her own son to stay in the Jayvilas palace (Chaitanya 2013). Although the

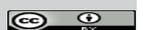
rent was just symbolic as ₹ 1 only, but it reflected the split between the mother and son. Rajmata had refused to give her son, property in her will. She had in fact gave share of her property to her daughters. In addition, she made her trustee Sambhaji Rao Angre the owner of the Vijayraje Scindia Trust.

During emergency, she was jailed, but she remained committed to her principles. Despite of the insistence of Atal Ji and Advani Ji for her candidature as national president of *Jan Sangh*, she didn't take over any office of profit. She wanted to render services as a dedicated worker of the *Sangh*.

For the first time in Madhya Pradesh a non-Congress government comprising opposition parties, *Samyukta Vidhyak Dal*, was formed with the

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help of Rajmata. She became the Supreme leader of the SVD. Later after joining the BJP, she worked hard to drive electoral gains for party. During emergency, she had to even go to Tihar jail with the ex Maharani of Jaipur, Gayatri Devi.

Despite being from royal family she lived her life with simplicity and commitment. She protested, when a close relative and confidant of the Maharaja, addressed her as “princess”, She replied, “you must not call me princess, I am not a princess”. He asked then how should he address her. She replied very boldly, “Lekhi Devi, that my original name. That is how visitors to our house address me”. This reflects her down to earth attitude in life (Bilgiri 2018). Rajmata, had seen many hardships in her personal life, still she remained dedicated for the public life and serving the people. After the death of her husband, she became member of the Parliament with Congress ticket in 1962. After five years, due to ideological differences she left Congress and joined *Jana Sangh*. Her Contribution in the politics of Madhya Pradesh is very Significant. She played a very important role in the formation of government in Madhya Pradesh in 1967. She adopted the path of struggle for the welfare of people on the principles of nationalism.

Whole her life, she worked like a Common person with simplicity. She was always dedicated for serving the people and never got Attracted to hold any post for profit.

For very long time, she worked with various schemes related to women and inspired women to establish their identity in society.

As an idol of sacrifice and dedication, she ruled on the hearts of people for years. Rajmata had a dream that when the lotus in the country will come in power, then only her last breath will take place. This dream was fulfilled when Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee government came in power.

As a part of the Bhartiya Janta Party, she won from Guna in 1989, and retained the seat in 1991, 1996 and 1998. In the BJP, she also played a primary role in leading the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement. She took the responsibility of providing hospitability to the karsevaks who visited the Gwalior region. In the words of late prime minister. Vajpayee, was an ideal political activist. Her children also credit her for instilling Confidence in them and for shaping their political journey.

One of her most notable achievements as Maharani was the founding of the *Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya* in 1956. The SKV paved the way for an all round Indian education of girls stressing on Indian values, religion and culture. She said, “Indian women had to come out and add to the family income as the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. I wanted a school to strenghten those hands.”

A pioneer in social reforms, throughout her life she was dedicated for the service of mankind. She organised women Forum’s, girls schools and colleges, industrial homes to teach women cooking, tailoring and these sorts of things to make them independent.

She retired from active politics in 1999, but still acted as one of the pillars strengthening the party in Madhya Pradesh.

J.P. Narayan

Jayaprakash Narayan widely known as J.P. Narayan or Loknayak was an Indian independence activist and political leader. He is remembered for leading the socialist movement in India and for initiating the peaceful Total revolution against the national emergency of the then prime minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, highest civilian award of India for his social work. In recognition of public service, he was awarded Magsaysay award too in 1965.

During freedom struggle, he dedicated his life to Vinoba Bhave’s Sarvodaya movement and *Bhoodan* campaign, which distributed land to *harijans*. He gave up his own land in setting up an *Ashram* in Hazaribagh while working towards uplifting the village.

J.P. Narayan became an effective personality among the *sarvodaya* workers of Gandhiji. He pursued the *lokniti* (Polity of the people) as opposed to *rajniti* (Polity of the State). For him a consensus based, classless, participatory democracy is needed to be evolved in society through *lokniti*.

In 1974, he led the student’s movement in the state of Bihar which gradually developed into a popular Bihar movement. During this movement, JP gave a call for peaceful Total revolution with V.M. Tarkunde. To defend civil liberties, he founded NGO’s called citizens for democracy and People’s union for civil liberties. His call for *Sampoorna Kranti*

was aimed to fight against rampant corruption, unemployment and systematic weakening of democratic institutions.

This revolution was not confined to political aspects only, but it resonated beyond the politics and encompassed social, economic, educational and cultural dimensions too. He visualised that power should come back and reside with people. He firmly believed in the youngsters to bring social transformation, so he mobilised students to fight against authoritarianism and corruption. His mesmerising personality had such influence that, parties like congress (O), *Jana Sangh* and *Swatantra Party* with other Socialists came together to form the *Janata Party*.

He followed the principles of Gandhiji like morality, ethics and values in shaping the political ideology. He played a phenomenal role in Indian Politics by utilizing concepts like “Total Revolution” and “Party less democracy”.

He commenced anti emergency Movement on the Gandhian principle of non violence. Even though, in 1977 unanimously he was chosen for the office of prime minister, but he declined and served the nation.

J.P. Narayan viewed socialism from Indian perspective. Socialism is a system of social reconstruction for him. It means to change the social economic and political life of the country. Its objectives are to establish equality and development of material and moral resources of society. Similarly, *Sarvodaya* implies for him a new order in which the society will be class – less and stateless. *Sarvodaya* aims to establish a new social order on the basis of truth, love and non violence. This vision criticises any form of authority based on force and coercion and opposes government.

Its ultimate aim is to establish a stateless society where the ruler and the ruled will be merged in the individual. He discussed at length about the concept of participatory and party less democracy in his pamphlet ‘*Swaraj for the people*’ in 1961. He advocated the active participation of people in the decision making. Development of the country would require economic and political decentralization. He followed Gandhian view, that more power should be given at the bottom level and higher level should have less functions and powers.

His views on decentralized democracy culminated though the incorporation of *panchayati Raj* system in constitution. Political parties should have no role to play in the functioning of *Panchayats*. There should be real devolution of power and responsibilities to the *Panchayats*.

He also viewed that political decentralization would lead to economic decentralization.

In post independence era, he called for total revolution against the problems of Indian polity. He fought against the issues of corruption, social discrimination, unemployment authoritarianism etc. Total revolution was a combination of social revolution, economic revolution, political, cultural educational, spiritual and thought revolution (Bimal 1979).

In his book Prison diary he observes that there has been no change in social, economic and political structure of society. The basic necessities of the people are not getting fulfilled. Therefore a systematic change through Total revolution is needed in society. These revolutionary ideas have contributed immensely in Indian politics.

Acharya J.B. Kripalni

Acharya Kripalni was a noted Gandhian, socialist and educationist. Born in Hyderabad, Sindh in 1888, he became the congress president in 1945 and later resigned from his position in 1947. After some time, Kripalni became the harsh Critic of His own party and its leaders. In 1972-73, he and other socialist leaders started Movements across the country and urged people to participate in non-violent protests against Indira Gandhi’s Government.

In 1975, during emergency he was among the first political leaders to be arrested. In his autobiography he criticised the entire congress leadership except Mahatma Gandhi for partition.

Kripalni remained a dissenting figure from the 1920s against the Britishers to the 1970s, against the Indira Government. He became a known figure in political spectrum for questioning and challenging the authority, if in his views it was wrong. He is also well known for his work in the field of education, environment and social movements (Sharma 2018).

Acharya Kripalni had participated in political activism since his student time. He had worked very closely with Gandhi Ji and played active role in

various movements initiated by him. In 1917, with Gandhiji, he fought for the cause of Indigo workers in Gujarat. Subsequently after joining the Congress party, he committed himself for social work and worked with Gandhiji's ashrams. From 1922 to 1927, he served as the principal of Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmadabad, which was founded by Gandhiji. He acquired the name of *Acharya* (Teacher), during his tenure in this school.

During the freedom struggle, he participated in civil disobedience movement and was jailed many times.

After Gandhiji assassination in 1948, he took upon himself the task of spreading Gandhian values and principles in resolving social issues. He wrote in his autobiography about Gandhiji's influence on his life that, "I cannot live in the light of the doctrines I have learnt from you, But Intellectually I am convinced that humanity's salvation lies this way."

He was a harsh critic of both Nehru and Indira Gandhi. He opposed the policies of Congress Party, which were against the Gandhian ideal of Village republics. During the period of 1972-73, Kriplani with Jaya Prakash Narayan and other socialist leaders initiated the non violent protest and civil disobedience against the Indira Gandhi Government. During emergency, he was among the first of these political leaders who got arrested.

He created the parliamentary history by introducing the first no-confidence motion in the *Lok Sabha* against Nehru's government. As an independent MP, he personified democratic dissent. On his own, he established his political career and founded *Kisan Mazdoor Praja* socialist party.

Speaker of the parliament allotted front seat to Kriplani during sessions, which is technically not a privilege of an independent M.P. T.N. Chaturvedi in his forward to Kriplani's autobiography recalls him as a social and political activist for almost 70 years, who never compromised on his views and principles to suit the interests of those who were in power.

In 1950, he launched a weekly Vigil. Its main objectives were to educate people about the responsibilities of authorities by following Gandhian views. He educated people to raise their voice against corruption in the administration, black marketing and tax evasion in commerce. Kriplani was a vigilant and vocal parliamentarian. He had in

depth information and analysis of ongoing events taking place at national and international level. He devoted a large part of his autobiography in discussing wide range of topics of national and international importance.

He devoted his entire life for working towards the welfare of the people and for the promotion of democratic norms and values in the country. An articulate advocate of parliamentary form of Governance he served the Country as a member of Constituent assembly. Although he was elected four times to the *Lok Sabha*, he consistently declined to accept any ministerial post.

Despite of being imprisoned several times he remained involved with public causes and constructive work till the end of his life on Gandhian values.

He remained committed to social and economic regeneration of India with his staunch moral and ethical principles. His insistence on adopting high values in public life and deep concern for social issues, impressed Sarjaini Naidu to call him, 'distinguished Vagabond'.

His multifaceted life's various stages from an independent bright young man to a respected national leader had unwavering commitment to the people.

He contributed immensely to the development of Indian Socialist thought. Kriplani's theoretical writings provide both a systematic interpretation of the ideas of Gandhi as well as a critique of modern industrialized society and Marxism.

He emphasized on the economic and political decentralization as necessary for the establishment of a democratic society which could ensure individual moral autonomy. Following Gandhian principles, he worked for the reconstruction of society and politics through the application of moral values to the public sphere. He perceived freedom as spiritual self-realization, which is the ultimate goal of a man in a free society.

Subhash Chandra Bose

Subhash Chandra Bose was one of the most charismatic freedom fighters of India. He influenced youth to join freedom struggle for India's independence. He formed Indian National Army (INA) and with the assistance of other countries

tried to overthrow Britishers from India. His efforts as a freedom fighter earned him the epithet of “Netaji” for his leadership qualities and dedication. Initially he joined Indian National Congress and played an important role in enlightening the students, youth and labourers of Kolkatta. As a charismatic youth icon, he was admired for his great ability in organization development.

Due to difference of opinion, later he departed from congress and sought to establish a complete self rule without any compromise. Forward bloc was formed due to his irreconcilable differences with Gandhiji in 1939.

S.C. Bose vehemently opposed the decision of congress party to support the Britishers during second world war. He imitated a mass movement with the slogan of ‘Give me blood and I will give you freedom’. On 21st October 1943, Subhas Bose proclaimed the formation of the provisional government of independent India in Singapore. Netaji went to the Andaman, which was occupied by the Japanese and hoisted Indian flag there. The *Azad Hind Fauj* Comprised of about 45,000 soliders, who were mostly Indian prisoners of war and Indians settled in various parts of South – East Asia.

The *Azad Hind Fauj*, with the Slogan of ‘*Delhi Chalo*’ was a source of inspiration to Indian. His contribution in Bringing together the Indians of all religions, regions, Indians settled in abroad for the cause of India’s freedom is highly commendable. Binding together the Indian from abroad for freedom struggle has been his exemplary contribution to Indian National movement.

Netaji had envisaged a socialist republic of India, where every citizen will have the right to a living wage. He was among the first leaders, who strongly advocated equality of wages for both men and women in all type of work. He proclaimed that free India will not be a land of capitalists, landlords and castes. He was optimistic that in new free India, Eradication of social problems like poverty and unemployment would be priority.

One of his greatest contributions was his ability to instill a sense of patriotism and responsibility among the workers with whom he was associated. Netaji laid the foundation for incorporation of women into the armed forces, which was extended in free India too. He was one of the early champions

of women rights and strongly believed in the equality of men and women in civil and military life. He considered the participation of women in the Indian freedom struggle extremely important.

Netaji was conscious of deep rooted spirituality of Indian society, so he never negated spirituality and wanted individuals to have full freedom in matters of religious worship in free India. He came in contact with the teachings, writings and philosophy of Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekanand and Sir Aurbindo Ghose. Under their influence, he became more idealistic and spiritualistic to state. His thinking concentrated on spiritual welfare and upliftment of humanity. This became the idealistic dimension of his religious and spiritual bent of mind.

S.C. Bose imbibed the philosophy of Aurbindo Ghosh and imagined Indian nation as the Divine mother, a spiritual entity, a fragment of the universal spirit. Thus spiritualism became one of the principal characteristics of his political philosophy. He inherited the spirit of nationalism from his father. He resigned from the civil service on account of his nationalistic zeal.

The ethical and spiritual ideals contributed to his formulation of political philosophy in consistence with Indian culture and civilisation. He had immense faith in the power of people, thus emphasizing on the common men as the agent of change, evolution and progress. He recognised the potential of the common man to participate in the political process.

Bose had an explicit strategy for India’s freedom from British imperialism, through international collaborations. This strategic framework accelerated the India’s independence struggle. Millions of Indians residing in South East Asia supported Bose’s government in exile financially. He had spent considerable effort in arranging funds from Indians community settled abroad. Bose was among the Indian revolutionaries who sought to ally with anti British forces worldwide as a reflection of active resistance to British rule.

Despite being immersed in the anti colonial struggle, SC Bose had the vision of socio economic reconstruction of India. The ideas he had put forward were the result of a philosophical mind applied to careful analysis of Indian society. His dynamic personality had various shades of being

a radical leader as well as a states man. His passionate devotion for freedom struggle is beyond comparison.

D.P. Mishra

D.P. Mishra, was the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh from 1963 to 1967 and Minister in Central provinces, Berar twice. He was a big figure in Congress Politics and provincial governance from the Pre to the post independence period in India.

He joined the National movement at a very young age for independence and worked with Gandhiji's various programmes. He played a pivotal role in organizing the political struggle in essential central provinces against the colonial rule. From 1920 onwards, he came into close association with Sardar Vallabha Bhai Patel and other national leaders to lead the national movement.

He ardently exposed the ruthless policies of the Britishers and spread awareness among people about their Divide, and rule policy. In his view, British bureaucratic administration was responsible for the backwardness of the Indian People. In his incessant efforts for India's freedom struggle, he was jailed for a number of years.

In the post independence era, he emerged as a prominent figure in the national political scene. As Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, he worked for all round development of the state. For Indian economy, he prepared development through industrialization and emphasized on India becoming a self sufficient economy. Even in the political sphere, he advocated fairness and truth and stood up against the practices of defections in Indian politics. D.P. Mishra was also a journalist of repute. He edited books like *lokmat*, *sharda* and *saarathi* and put his views across the masses through literature.

He had Interest in English, Hindi, Urdu, Sanskriti literature. His greatest epic Krishnayan was written in 1942 during his imprisonment. He was so convinced with his ideas that for long time he had ideological differences with Jawaharlal Nehru.

Although at some of the most crucial junctures in Indira Gandhi's political career, he rendered pragmatic advise to her. In some of the dire political situations, she found resort in the wisdom of D.P. Mishra. It was remarkable that he had deep insight into the politics of that time.

It is also true that Mishra was not in sympathy with the Nehru Gandhi dynastic rule and did not distract his political beliefs due to proximity with Indiraji. In his views, the public face of a person can be fabricated by people who have specialization in marketing consumers, but to create the genuine persona of a leader is a different matter. His epic Krishnayan was highly acclaimed by critics. Through this book he had portrayed the dream of a happy and free India, where largest number of people's welfare have been served. From the birth of Krishna, his life story has been narrated in this epic as Krishna remained the ideal of Mishra.

He served as the vice chancellor of the Sagar University, where his addiction to studies was well known. On his article in Lokmat about the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Nehru said India's best criminal lawyer can't write the editorial, which was written by D.P. Mishra. His autobiography *Living an Era* incorporates the history of India and search of Lanka is quite notable. He had a profound personality and a genuine persona of a different matter.

Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla

He was the first chief minister of the Madhya Pradesh state whose significant role in convincing the several princely states in joining Indian Union is quite praiseworthy (Ramu 2021). Inspired by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, he supported *Lal – Bal – Pal* School of militant nationalism in his participation for India's freedom struggle. Shukla joined the Theological society of India to discover the vastness of the Hindu religion. He organized the Madhya Pradesh Hindi Sahitya Sammdan and actively worked for the advancement of Hindi over English as a medium of education. For almost two decades he worked very closely with Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and established Kanyapurja Mahasabha.

During the rule of Britishers in India, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla played an active role as a freedom fighter. In 1918, Pandit Shukla and Bammanrao Lanke held a congressional conclave in Raipur.

The conference was organized with the entry ticket. Some of the Britishers tried to enter into the conference venue without tickets. Pandit Ji stopped the entry of the Britishers without ticket. He told the Britishers that "our men are also entering with

the ticket, then how could you enter without ticket” Both of them holded their hands together and stopped the way of the Britishers.

After this whole incident, the English Police got scared and arrested Pandit Shukla and Lanke. They were made to walk in the market place, wearing hand cuffs. This left a deep impression of Pandit Shukla’s belligerent and brave attitude in the history of freedom struggle.

In another incidence, he proved his unbiased and brave attitude for social welfare.

While struggling for the freedom of country , he was arrested again and brought to the jail of Siwani. There was a trend of taking the mark of thumb from every prisoner brought to the prison. When Pandit Shukla was asked to put the thumb mark, he said, “Iam a political prisoner, not a thief, who will give thumb impression “At that time, Seoni’s deputy collector RN Pendrakar with the use of force took the thumb impression of Pandit Shukla.

Pandit Shukla remembered this incidence and never forgotten Pendrakar for this. After becoming the first chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, when the file of promotion of deputy collectors came to Pandit Shukla, he remembered the name of Pendrakar. Despite of Pendakar’s rude behaviour with Pandit Shukla in past, Pandit Shukla told his home secretary that “Ths officer is very dutiful and good, he should be promoted”.

Pendrakar became deputy commissioner. Pandit Shukla had put the humiliation faced with Pendrakar aside and proved his broad vision and unprejudiced attitude for social welfare.

Before joining politics, he devoted himself to the Upliftment of Society. He believed and Spread the Philosophy that the primary duty of every Indian is to work for the independence of country. With Gandhiji, he realised that it is their duty to awaken the dormant political awareness of Madhya Pradesh. Pandit Shikla Participated in freedom Movement with full vigour and dedication. As a result his series of imprisonment were obvious. In 1937, when Indians acquired partial power, he became the education minister for a few months and then the prime minister of Madhya Pradesh.

After taking part in Quit India Movement, he relinquished his post by the end of 1979. Again

in 1945, he became the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh for the last ten years of his life. As a successful administrator during his period, there was an all round development of the Madhya Pradesh. He introduced various schemes, establishment of industries, Commissioning of Bhilai steel plant and establishment of many industries in the state. During his regime, Madhya Pradesh remained fully peaceful.

Pandit Shukla played crucial role in the merger of states after independence, particularly the merger of Hyderabad with the republic. Vallabh Bhai Patel appreciated his efforts whole heartedly. Although state Reorganization Commission had recommended that the territory of five states should be joined to form Madhya Pradesh, but no one imagined that it could be turned into reality. When Pandit Nehru saw the map of Madhya Pradesh for first time, he exclaimed, “Hey, what is this strange. How can such a tall and Unwieldy kingdom become? Even the reporters asked Pandit Shukla- ‘Is this also a state! like the nature of Ganesha! Somewhere hands, somewhere foot, somewhere head! He replied, ‘well’ you can say that even Ganesha ji is rich!

His Contribution in the formation of Madhya Pradesh is among his great achievements. He was also a great social reformer and an upholder of women rights. He strongly opposed illiteracy, purdah and *dowry* system and worked whole heartedly for upliftment of women. Pandit Shukla will be remembered as the first chief minister of the Madhya Pradesh who pioneered the nationalism by adopting traditional values.

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