

## Chapter

# 7

## Emergence of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian Politics and his Ideology

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as Mahatma Gandhi, emerged on the Indian political scene during the period 1917-18 and significantly transformed the ideology and range of the National Movement. With his entry, the national movement entered its third and final phase of struggle, also known as the era of Mass Mobilisation under Mahatma Gandhi (1919-47). Purna Swaraj or complete Independence emerged as the goal of the national movement during this phase.

The period of Gandhian activities before 1920 is described as the formative stage of Gandhi. It includes his struggle in South Africa and early Satyagraha agitations in India (Champaran, Kheda, Ahmedabad and Rowlatt Satyagraha). This was also the period during which he mainly tried to understand the socio-political and economic reality of India.

Thus, in the first half of this chapter, we shall learn about the early life and political career of Gandhi. In the second half, we shall also cover some of the most significant aspects of Gandhian ideology to enable the reader, better appreciate Gandhian techniques and methods.

### GANDHI'S EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born at Porbandar in Kathiawar Gujarat on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869. He was born in a well to do Vaishya family which was closely connected with the Jain sect with whom ahimsa is a cardinal principle. Gandhi went to England in 1881 to study law and returned to India after ten years as a young barrister and began practicing law in Bombay High Court. However, unable to establish a successful practice there, he soon shifted to Rajkot and took up the work of petition-writing for earning his livelihood. In 1893, Gandhi sailed to **Durban (Natal province)** in connection with a legal case of Dada Abdulla and Co., an Indian firm doing business in South Africa.



Gandhi as a student of law  
(London)



### GANDHI'S EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In 1893, at age 24, Gandhi was the first Indian barrister to have arrived in South Africa. Gandhi's experiences in South Africa had a profound impact on his life and career that followed. He had gone there on a year's contract with Dada Abdulla and Co., but ended up staying for the next 20 years, i.e. up to 1914 with two breaks in between, having picked up struggle against racial discrimination (apartheid) in South Africa and fought for the rights of the Indian community.

**Apartheid:** It refers to discrimination against a community based on the colour of the skin.

### Condition of Indians in South Africa

The Indian community in South Africa comprised of nearly 2 lakh Indians, most of them were indentured or freed labourers who had come from South India to work for the white sugar planters in South Africa (1890 and afterwards). There were also a few merchants and their clerks and assistants. The indentured labourers were treated as semi-slaves by the white planters. The others were subjected to various forms of racial discrimination such as:

- Racial discrimination with respect to citizenship rights, freedom of trade and right to property, etc.
- Indians were denied the right to vote, they could reside only in prescribed locations and were not allowed to use the footpath or move out at night without a permit.
- They were prohibited from travelling in first and second class railway compartments. All Indians were addressed as 'coolie' meaning labourer.
- There were hotels and restaurants that were exclusively reserved for Europeans and Indians were prohibited to enter.
- The ex-indentured labourers had to pay 3 pounds as poll tax.

The ex-indentured labourers who had continued to live in South Africa with their children were not educated, knew little English and accepted racial discrimination as part of their daily existence. However, with Gandhi, things were different. He was the son of a Diwan of an Indian state and belonged to a highly-respected family of Kathiawar. He had spent three years in London studying for the bar and had not contacted overt racialism either in Indian or in England, but which he now contacted within days of his arrival in South Africa. Naturally, he found it hard to swallow and decided to protest.

### Gandhi's First Racial Humiliation

Gandhi first faced racial humiliation while travelling from Durban to Pretoria by train. In fact, this journey which he undertook within a week of his arrival comprised a series of racial humiliations. Though he had bought a first-class ticket, he was asked to shift to Van Compartment. When he resisted, he was roughed up and thrown out of the first-class compartment by a White man and left to spend the night shivering in the waiting room. On reaching Johannesburg, he wouldn't get

a room in any of the hotels as they were meant to serve only the Whites. Again, while travelling from Johannesburg to Pretoria he was subjected to considerable humiliation.

Upon reaching Pretoria, he immediately called a meeting of Indians and encouraged them to learn English, organise themselves and protest against such oppression. However, it was the proposed bill of Natal government to disfranchise Indians, which finally compelled Gandhi to launch his struggle in South Africa.

### Gandhi's Political Career in South Africa (1893–1914)

#### First Phase—The Moderate Phase (1894–1906)

**Gandhi's struggle against Disfranchisement Bill and Formation of Indian Natal Organization:** Gandhi had settled the legal case of Abdulla and Co. and was preparing to return to India when, in a farewell party, he read the news regarding the proposed legislature of the Natal government. The Indian merchants present at the party pleaded with Gandhi to stay on a little longer and help them organise the protest as they did not know enough English to draft petitions and so on. Infuriated as he was, Gandhi decided to postpone his return and the farewell party immediately turned into a planning committee, formulating a plan of action against the bill. Thus, **Gandhi's first struggle in South Africa** was launched against the disfranchisement Bill of the Natal government.

It is also noteworthy that before Gandhi, Indians did not demand equal treatment because they felt that they were discriminated against due to their 'backwardness' or 'lack of civilisation'. However, discrimination against Gandhi, the first westernised Indian in south Africa, demonstrated to all that the root cause of discrimination lay, above all else, in the colour of their skin. Further, the responsibility of waging a struggle against racial discrimination lay heavily on the shoulders of Gandhi as he was the only one who could speak the White Man's language, understand their law and confront them as an equal.

**Formation of Indian Natal Organisation-** In order to launch his struggle and unite the Indians of Natal for the political cause, Gandhi founded the Indian Natal Organization in 1893. The formation of INO is seen as the beginning of the 'moderate phase' of Gandhi's struggle in South Africa.

In this period, Gandhi sent petitions and memorials to the South African legislatures, to the Colonial Secretary in London and to the British Parliament to voice the demands of the Indian people and arouse the British sense of justice and fair play. He also made efforts to unite the Indians and give wide publicity to their demands. He tried to secure the support of people and governments in South Africa, India as well as in Britain for the Indian cause. In India, the Indian National Congress even passed a resolution condemning the disfranchising bill.

Led by Gandhi, 400 Indians living in Natal submitted a petition against the Bill. When the Bill was passed despite Indian opposition, Gandhi sent a long petition signed by 10,000 Indians to the Colonial Secretary in England with the appeal that the unjust Bill should not be assented to by the Queen. Taking note of the strong opposition, the Colonial office in London vetoed the Bill on the ground that it discriminated against the inhabitants of another part of the British Empire. Despite this, the Natal government achieved its objective by passing the Bill in an amended form.



**Gandhi faces the European wrath:** Gandhi continued his struggle against racial discrimination by writing articles and publishing pamphlets in order to mobilise public support which simultaneously evoked the wrath of many Europeans in South Africa.

In the middle of 1896, Gandhi had sailed for India and reached Rajkot. Around the same time, plague broke out in Bombay threatened to spread in adjoining regions. Even as Gandhi engaged himself in volunteer work—spreading awareness on sanitation and prevention of diseases, he received an urgent message from Natal asking him to return immediately. In December 1896, when Gandhi landed in Durban with his family, his return was opposed by a mob of 4,000 Europeans at the port. Later, he was even attacked by a European mob that beat him and kicked him and he was saved only by the efforts of the wife of a senior police official. This episode, however, could not deter Gandhi from continuing his agitation.



Gandhi shortly after arriving in South-Africa (1895)

**Gandhi volunteers during Boer War (1899–1902):** The Boers were South Africans of Dutch origin. They were fighting the British. Though neither of the two parties had treated the Indians well, Gandhi raised a group of stretcher-bearers as the Natal Indian Ambulance Corps (presumably to disprove the British stereotype that Hindus were not fit for 'manly' work). Soon the British won the war and Gandhi's war efforts were liberally praised by English newspapers.

**Gandhi attends 1901 Calcutta Congress Session (President, WE Wacha):** In 1901, Gandhi felt that his future activity lay not in South Africa but in India and he decided to return. On his arrival, he set off for a tour of the country to understand India and the problems of its people. He also attended the Calcutta Congress Session that year; **his first contact with the INC**. During the session, he got the opportunity to meet Congress Leaders like Pherozeshah Mehta, BG Tilak, Gk Gokhale and others. Gandhi even succeeded in getting a resolution passed on the condition of Indians in South Africa.

Gandhi had just begun to settle down in Bombay, when once again a cable reached him requesting his presence in South Africa on an urgent matter.

**Indian Opinion (1903) and Phoenix Settlement (1904):** Thus in 1902, Gandhi again returned to South Africa and resumed his struggle against racial discrimination. He started journal, **Indian Opinion** (1903), which became a mouthpiece of Gandhi's struggle. The journal was published every week in English and Gujarati and was edited by **Mansukhlal Naazar**.

Inspired by **John Ruskin's** book on economics, *Unto the Last*, Gandhi hit upon the idea of starting a farm and leading a simple community life. In 1904, he and his associates shifted to Phoenix near Durban; Indian Opinion was also shifted to the farm, complete with press and office. Families at the farm lived simple lives, cultivating the soil or working at the press. It was the inhabitants of Phoenix who later became the chief participants of Gandhi's Satyagraha protest.



Gandhi as a lawyer in South Africa (1906)

## Second Phase—The Phase of Civil Disobedience/Satyagraha (1906–14)

The second phase began with the first use of passive resistance or civil disobedience or satyagraha. Gandhi had deep faith in the British sense of justice until, in 1906, the government of Transvaal (a province neighbouring Natal) proposed a bill to further humiliate the Indians. In the course of his struggle against the discriminatory law, he realized that his petitions and memorials fell on deaf ears and it became clear to him that the British were not interested in addressing the grievances of the Indian people. Once disenchanted, **he now turned to Civil Disobedience**, which he called Satyagraha.

**Gandhi's struggle against Asiatic Registration Bill and Formation of Passive Resistance Association (1906–14):** The bill proposed compulsory registration of Indians. Whoever failed to register within the window period given would be guilty of an offence and liable to be suitably punished. Further, an Indian could be asked to produce his registration certificate any time. The police officers were also permitted to enter into an India's house and check for the papers.

When the Bill was passed despite vehement opposition by Indians, Gandhi led a delegation to England to personally request the British authorities to stop the bill from becoming a law. Gandhi's appeals, however, fell on deaf ears.

**Formation of Passive Resistance Association:** Gandhi now felt compelled to evolve a new technique—Satyagraha, or insistence on truth, to protest against the new law. He founded the Passive Resistance Association with the aim of uniting Indians to boycott the permit offices (Thus, Gandhi first used satyagraha against the Asiatic Registration Bill). The boycott proved to be a huge success and the Transvaal authorities failed to exhort Indians to get themselves registered.

When the last date for registration was over, many passive resisters (or Satyagrahis as Gandhi called them) including Gandhi, were sent to jail. Many others offered to go to jail and the numbers swelled to 155.

**General Smuts**, Secretary for colonies, proposed to meet Gandhi for talks and offered to withdraw the legislation if Indians voluntarily registered themselves. Gandhi accepted this proposition and called a meeting to discuss views on the agreement reached. Gandhi was, however, severely criticised by fellow Indians who expected no justice from General Smuts. The next day, on his way to the registration office, Gandhi was even attacked by a Pathan Mir Air Alam for his alleged betrayal.

Soon the Indian fears proved true when Smuts backed out from his words and did not withdraw the legislation. Gandhi restarted the satyagraha agitation and exhorted Indians to burn their certificates and face the consequences. It was during this agitation that Gandhi decided to **give up his legal practice**. He felt that he could no longer practice law when he was himself defying it! Even as this agitation was going on, the Transvaal government enacted the Immigration law prohibiting new immigrants from India and the satyagraha movement was extended against this law as well.

**Setting up the Tolstoy Farm (1910):** As the satyagrahis continued to court arrest, funds for supporting the families of satyagrahis started running out. Gandhi then set up the Tolstoy Farm to house the families of the satyagrahis. Financial support for this task was provided by several



people and organizations such as **Hermann Kallenbach** (Gandhi's German architect friend), Sir **Ratan Tata**, **Nizam of Hyderabad**, the **Congress** and the **Muslim League**. This farm became a precursor of later Gandhian ashrams in India. The people in Tolstoy Farm led simple community life and received training in satyagraha agitation.

According to Gandhi, an ideal satyagrahi was to be truthful and perfectly peaceful, but at the same time, he would refuse to submit to what he considered wrong. During his insistence on truth, he would accept suffering willingly; but even while resisting evil, he would hate the evil doer. Hatred would be alien to the nature of a true satyagrahi.

**Continuation of Satyagraha:** During 1911–12, coinciding with the coronation of King George V, a brief agreement was reached between the government and the Indians. During this period, **Gopal Krishna Gokhale** visited South Africa. He was treated as a state guest and was promised that all discriminatory laws against Indians will be removed. The promise, however, was not kept and the satyagrahis resumed their protest in 1913. This time, the satyagraha was widened and included protest against the following:

**1. Asiatic Registration Act**

**2. Poll tax:** A poll tax of three pounds was levied on all ex-indentured labourers. This weighed heavily on poor labourers as their wages were just about 10 shillings a month.

**3. Immigration Law**

**4. A Supreme Court judgment invalidating all marriages not conducted according to Christian rites and not registered:** In 1913, this judgement came as yet another blow to Indians in South Africa. It implied that all Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages were illegal and the children born out of such marriages were illegitimate. The act was seen as particularly offensive to Indian women, who now joined the satyagraha movement in large numbers (including Kasturba, Gandhi's wife).

As the protest continued, the satyagrahis were imprisoned en masse. The satyagrahis were treated badly in Jail and forced to undergo hard labour. They were starved and whipped and forced to work in mines. Even Gandhi was kept in a dark cell, he had to dig stones and sweep the compound.

In India, GK Gokhale toured the country to garner support for Gandhi's movement and arouse public opinion against such atrocities inflicted upon peaceful satyagrahis. Even Viceroy Hardinge condemned the repression and demanded an enquiry into the charges of atrocities levelled against the South African government. Subsequently a series of negotiations were held involving Gandhi, Hardinge, General Smuts and **CF Andrews**. A compromise was finally reached and the government of South Africa conceded to major Indian demands. General Smuts passed the **India Relief Act 1914** abolishing the poll tax on freed labourers, marriages performed as per Indian rites were declared legal and the domicile certificate was now required only to enter the Union of South Africa.

In this way, Gandhi's eight-year long satyagraha movement (1906–14) was finally called off.

## Significance of Gandhi's Experiences in South Africa

Gandhi's experiences in South Africa had a deep impact on Gandhi's life, thoughts, ethics and politics. It was in South Africa that Gandhi's abilities as an organiser, fund-raiser and journalist first came to the forefront. It was in South Africa that Gandhi evolved the blueprint of his methods that prepared him for the leadership of India's freedom struggle.

Gandhi was able to build faith in the capacity of the masses and their ability to sacrifice. It was in South Africa that Gandhi learnt to unite diverse sections of society—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Tamilians, Gujaratis, the poor labourers and the rich merchants, men and women in a struggle against a common oppressor. Gandhi learnt that leadership involved facing the anger of the enemy as well as the followers. When he reached a compromise, or withdrew a protest, there were instances when he faced the ire of his own people. Thus, South Africa was a huge learning experience for Gandhi where he evolved his skills as a leader and politician, tried new techniques and perfected them.

Though historian Judith Brown is of the view that satyagraha was merely a clever technique designed by Gandhi in South Africa, a wider look at Gandhi's struggle shows that Gandhi had developed an abiding faith in this method and it was not merely a convenient tool applied in a given situation.

Finally, Gandhi's struggle in South Africa made him something of an international celebrity. While leaders like Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal mostly had a regional base, Gandhi emerged as a leader of the Indian people and not of any region or community, giving Gandhi a definite edge in Indian politics.

**Charles Freer Andrews (1871–1940):** He was a Christian priest who became a close friend of Gandhi and played a key role in convincing Gandhi to return to India from South Africa. He emerged as a Christian missionary and educator in India who identified with the cause of India's independence. For his contribution to India's freedom struggle, Gandhi and his students at St. Stephen's College Delhi named him **Deenbandhu** (friend of the poor).

## GANDHI ARRIVES IN INDIA (9<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1915)

Gandhi had begun to feel that his mission in South Africa was over and he should now return to India. At that time Gokhale was in London and he wanted that Gandhi should meet him first before he returned to India. Accordingly, Gandhi sailed for England. By the time he reached London, First World War had been declared.

The war was on. What could Gandhi do in England? In a meeting of Indians, Gandhi expressed the view that Indians residing in England ought to help Britain in war effort and that England's difficulty should not be turned into India's opportunity. He insisted on rendering all possible help and organised an **Ambulance Corps** which, in spite of all difficulties, helped the British in their time of need. The British authorities thanked Gandhi by honouring him with **Kaiser-e-Hind** Gold Medal in 1915.



On 9<sup>th</sup> January 1915, Gandhi finally returned to India at the age of 46. The moderate leader Gokhale was Gandhi's **political guru** in India. Though Gokhale eagerly wanted Gandhi to join Servants of India Society, he could not join on account of opposition by certain members. Gokhale had advised Gandhi not to take a political stand on any political issue for the first year. This was also in keeping with Gandhi's own style of never intervening in a situation without first studying it meticulously. So, Gandhi spent his first year travelling all over India and setting up his ashram at Ahmedabad. During his tour, he also visited Shantiniketan and the Kumbh Mela in Hardwar, where masses flocked to him for his 'darshan'.

In 1915, he set up his India ashram originally known as **Satyagraha Ashram** which was later shifted to a place on the banks of River Sabarmati and came to be known as the **Sabarmati Ashram** (June 1917). Gandhi lived here for nearly 12 years with his friends and followers, learning and practicing the ideas of truth and non-violence.

When Annie Besant approached Gandhi to join her in starting a Home Rule League, he refused on the ground that he did not wish to embarrass the British government during their time of difficulty (First World War was going on). Thus, he maintained distance from the Home Rule Movement of 1916. He attended the 1916 Lucknow Session of the Congress but took care not to associate himself with either the moderates or the extremists. He also succeeded in getting a resolution passed demanding abolition of the practice of recruiting indentured labourers.



Gandhi in 1915

### Gandhi's Entry into Indian Politics: Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda (1917-18)

Gandhi's first political agitations in India involved Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda struggles. All these were local level agitations and gave Gandhi the reputation of a man who works at the grass root level. These agitations also successfully tested his techniques on Indian soil.

#### Champaran Satyagraha (Bihar, 1917)

Gandhi's first intervention was for the indigo farmers of Champaran. Champaran in the Tirhut division of north Bihar had been seething with agrarian discontent for some time. In the beginning of the 19th century European planters had established indigo farms and factories in Champaran. Indigo was cultivated under the **Tinkathia** system, under which the Indian tenant cultivators were usually pressurised into contracts to cultivate indigo on 3/20<sup>th</sup> of their land holdings in return for an advance at the beginning of the cultivation season. The cultivators were then forced to sell their crop for a fixed and usually uneconomic price.

But now synthetic dyes began to be produced in Germany which were cheaper than indigo. The European planters in Champaran began to face losses and tried to transfer the burden of this loss to the tenants. They offered to release the tenants from growing indigo, if the latter paid some compensation. They also increased the rent and imposed illegal dues.

Earlier, during the 1916 Lucknow Congress, Gandhi had taken no interest on the issue of Champaran cultivators on the ground that he had no knowledge on the matter. However, **Raj**

**Kumar Shukla**, a peasant from Champaran, persuaded Gandhi to come and investigate the situation. When Gandhi reached Champaran, the Bihar government felt threatened and served him with an order to leave on the pretext that he was 'a danger to public peace'. Gandhi decided to disobey the order "out of a sense of public responsibility", constituting **Gandhi's first act of civil disobedience in India**. Undeterred, Gandhi continued with his investigation with his colleagues that included Brij Kishore, Rajendra Prasad, Gorakh Prasad, Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parekh, Mazhar-ul-Haq, and JB Kripalani. Together they toured the villages and mobilised the peasants.

Finally, the government felt compelled to appoint the **Champaran Agrarian Committee**, with Gandhi as one of its members, to enquire into the matter. Gandhi convinced the commission to recommend abolition of Tinkathia system as well as various illegal exactions. The committee also recommended to compensate the peasants for illegal dues (recommended 25 per cent refund). All major recommendations of the committee were included in the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1917 and Gandhi won his first battle of civil disobedience in India.

Though the chief supporters of Gandhi came from the educated middle class, the real massive support came from the Champaran peasantry who rallied behind him impressed by his unassuming conduct. Gandhi had walked on foot or bullock-cart and talked to them in a language they understood, with the effect that the psychological impact of Champaran struggle was greater than anything else. It was a stepping stone towards emergence of Gandhi as a leader of the downtrodden. With its success, it not only gave the peasants their initial taste of empowerment but also dented the notion of invincibility of the British rulers.

**Rajendra Prasad (1884-1963):** Born in Bihar, Babu Rajendra Prasad began his career as a teacher and in 1916 joined the High Court of Bihar and Orissa as a lawyer. Having joined the Congress in 1911, he met Gandhi for the first time during the 1916 Lucknow Session and emerged as an active leader of the 1917 **Champaran Satyagraha**. Greatly impressed by Gandhi's courage and conviction, he gave up his legal practice and joined the freedom movement full time (1920 onwards). In the Interim Government formed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1946, Prasad headed the **Food and Agriculture Department**. On 11<sup>th</sup> December 1946, he was elected as the President of the Constituent Assembly and on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 when India became a republic, he rose to become the **first elected President of Indian Republic** and was subsequently awarded the **Bharat Ratna**.



Rajendra Prasad

#### Kheda Satyagraha (Gujarat, 1918)

Gandhi organised the second agitation for the peasants of Kheda in Gujarat. Kheda was a fertile region producing ample food grains, tobacco and cotton. The rich peasant proprietors were called Patidars.

In 1917, Kheda received excessive rains which led to large scale destruction of kharif crops. This coincided with the war time rise in prices which further disturbed the shoe-string budget of the peasants. The revenue code stated that there should be a total remission of land revenue if crops were less than 25 per cent of normal production. Two Bombay barristers, VJ Patel and JK Parekh had already conducted an enquiry and concluded that a major portion of crop had been



damaged and there was a case for remission. However, the government did not agree with this view and after an independent enquiry, the collector decided that there was no case for remission.

Gandhi, who was the president of the Gujarat Sabha then, maintained that crops had been significantly damaged and that the cultivators were entitled to revenue suspension as a legal right and not as any concession by grace. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1918, at a meeting at Nadiad, Gandhi decided to launch a satyagraha. This was **first real Gandhian peasant satyagraha in India**. He toured the villages and urged the peasants not to pay land revenue and to expel their fear of government authority.

In this struggle, Gandhi was supported by **Indulal Yajnik, Vallabh Bhai Patel and Anasuya Sarabhai**. Within a month, the satyagraha reached its peak with more than 2000 peasants taking an oath for non-payment of revenue. Most of the Patidars also participated. Soon Kheda saw a good Rabi crop which weakened the case for remission. The satyagrahis had also begun to show signs of exhaustion. Moreover, the government had also issued instructions that revenue should be recovered only from those who had the capacity to pay. In view of these developments, Gandhi decided to call off the agitation.

The Kheda Satyagraha did not involve the entire Kheda region and only 70 out of 559 villages actually participated. It was also called off only after a token concession. Yet, it helped Gandhi in broadening his social base in rural Gujarat.

**Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (1875–1950):** A young Gujarati lawyer during the Kheda satyagraha, Vallabhbhai rose to be the first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of free India. Patel was ushered into Indian Freedom Movement following a meeting with Gandhi in October 1917. Henceforth, he emerged as an avid supporter of Gandhi and played a prominent role in Gujarat satyagrahas of Kheda and Bardoli. It was during the Bardoli Satyagraha that the women of Bardoli bestowed upon him the title of '**Sardar**' meaning chief or leader.

As Home Minister, he led the task of integrating into India nearly 565 princely states that had become independent following the lapse of British paramountcy in 1947, earning him the title of '**Iron Man of India**' or the 'Unifier of India'. His birthday, 31st October, is celebrated every year as '**Rashtriya Ekta Divas**' since 2014. Having played a key role in establishment of modern all-India services system, he is also remembered as '**Patron saint of India's civil servants**'.



Vallabhbhai Patel (centre), with his daughter Maniben Patel and Acharya J. B. Kripalani (left)

### Ahmedabad Mill Strike (Gujarat, 1918)

Gandhi's Ahmedabad agitation was **not against the British**. It was an intervention in the internal dispute between the Gujarati mill owners and their workers. Ahmedabad was fast emerging as a leading industrial town in Gujarat. However, the mill owners often faced scarcity of labour. The shortage of labour was further accentuated by the outbreak of plague in 1917, which drove many workers away from Ahmedabad (a plague epidemic had struck Ahmedabad in 1917–18, killing more than 20,000 people). To hold back the workers in Ahmedabad, the mill owners decided to pay 'Plague Bonus' which was sometimes as high as 75 per cent of the regular wages of the workers.

The dispute started when the mill owners tried to end the 'plague bonus' once the epidemic had ended. The workers wanted the bonus to stay on the ground that it was helping them offset the war time rise in prices. The mill owners were ready to pay 25 per cent increase but the workers were demanding 50 per cent raise in wages in view war-time inflation.

Gandhi kept himself informed of the workers' conditions in Ahmedabad through the Gujarat Sabha as well as through Ambalal Sarabhai, a mill owner who had financially helped Gandhi's ashram. Following a discussion with Sarabhai, Gandhi decided to intervene in the matter. Initially, both the mill-owners and the workers agreed for arbitration by a board chaired by the Collector; Gandhi was on the board representing the workers. But suddenly the mill owners withdrew stating that Gandhi had no real mandate from the workers and there was no guarantee that the workers would accept the arbitration award.

Following this episode, Gandhi took up a detailed study of the case. He went through a mass of data concerning the financial state of the mills and made a comparative study of workers' wages with the wages given in Bombay. He concluded that the workers can justly demand upto 35 per cent wage hike and no more and organised a satyagraha movement against the mill owners. Gandhi urged the workers not to resume work unless 35 per cent wage raise was conceded.

In this struggle, Gandhi was assisted by **Anasuya Sarabhai**, even as her brother Ambalal Sarabhai was one of the main adversaries. Gandhi organised daily mass meetings of workers and addressed them on the banks of Sabarmati River. After a few days, when workers began to show signs of fatigue, Gandhi decided to go on hunger strike from 15th March 1918 to encourage workers to continue with their struggle. This was the **first time, Gandhi used the weapon of hunger strike**. Gandhi's fast stirred high passions in Ahmedabad and the mill owners agreed to submit the whole issue to a tribunal.

Finally, the tribunal award went in favour of a 35 per cent wage raise for the workers, earning Gandhi tremendous popularity among the Ahmedabad workers.

### Significance of Local Agitations

These local agitations served as a demonstration of Gandhian politics and techniques. They helped Gandhi find his feet among Indians and study their problems first hand. During these agitations, Gandhi earned respect and commitment of an entire generation of political workers. They were especially impressed by his willingness to take up the cause of ordinary Indians. Gandhi was the first Indian nationalist leader who identified his life with the life of the common people. Finally, the success of these agitations gave Gandhi the confidence to later launch an all-India satyagraha against Rowlatt Act in February 1919.

According to **Judith Brown** (a historian and a biographer of Gandhi), the significance of these early agitations lay in the recruitment of 'sub-contractors' who would serve as Gandhi's lifelong lieutenants and included Rajendra Prasad, Anugraha Narayana Sinha and JB Kripalani in Champaran; Vallabhbhai Patel, Mahadev Desai, Indulal Yajnik and Shankarlal Banker in Ahmedabad and Kheda. But this view is criticised as too simplistic as these agitations ultimately paved the way for Gandhi's emergence as an all-India leader.



## Rowlatt Satyagraha

During the period 1917–1918, Gandhi busied himself in local issues and did not take active interest in the Reform proposals. However, it was the government decision to pass the Rowlatt Bills which plunged him forcefully into national politics and it was to protest against the 'Rowlatt' Act that Gandhi launched an **all-India satyagraha for the first time**.

### Rowlatt Act

In 1917, the Government of India had appointed a committee under the chairmanship of **Justice Sydney Rowlett** to investigate 'revolutionary crime' in the country and recommend measures to suppress it. The publication of this report coincided with the Montagu-Chelmsford Report.

The committee produced evidence of detailed subversive activities and proposed to strengthen anti-revolutionary law. On the basis of Rowlett's recommendations, the government drafted two bills and presented them before the Imperial Legislative Council in 1919. The new bills provided for:

- Continuation of war time restrictions.
- Trial of offences by a special court comprising of three high court judges. The court could meet in camera and take into consideration evidence not permissible under Indian Evidence Act. Further, no appeal could be made against the decision of this court.
- Proposed authorisation of the government to search and arrest without warrant.
- Detention without trial for up to two years.

### Indian Response

These proposals were considered by the nationalists as a grave insult and as an attempt to conciliate a section of white opinion that had been offended by the Montagu reform proposals.

Gandhi severely criticised the bills stating that the proposed powers were out of all proportion to the danger, especially when the Viceroy possessed emergency powers of legislation by ordinance. He condemned the bills as instruments of repression and distrust, nullifying the advance achieved by Montagu proposals. He also condemned the manner in which the bills were formulated, with complete disregard to public opinion. Gandhi now prepared to launch his struggle.

### The Movement

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 1919, at Bombay, Gandhi formed a Satyagraha Sabha to protest against the Rowlatt Bills, the members signed a pledge proclaiming their determination "to refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a committee hitherto appointed may think fit and we further affirm that in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property."

While launching the satyagraha agitation, Gandhi declared, "It is my firm belief that we shall obtain salvation only through suffering and not by reforms dropping on us by the English- they use brute force, we soul force."

### Who opposed Gandhi's Rowlatt Satyagraha?

A group of **Liberals** led by Surendranath Banerjee, DE Wacha, TB Sapru, Srinivas Sastri opposed the satyagraha on the ground that it would hamper the upcoming constitutional reforms. Some of them also felt unsure about the capacity of the ordinary citizens to follow the discipline of satyagraha. **Annie Besant** opposed the satyagraha on the ground that there was nothing in the Act to resist civilly. Tilak's main followers **NC Kelkar** and **GS Khaparde** also opposed the satyagraha.

### Who supported Gandhi's Rowlatt Satyagraha?

However, **the younger elements of Besant's Home Rule League** supported Gandhi and formed his main cadre in different parts of the country! These included Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Shankarlal Banker, Umar Sobhani and BG Horniman.

Simultaneously, the issue of Khilafat in Turkey had emerged. Ottoman Turkey was defeated in the First World War and Indian Muslims began to worry about the future of Khilafat in Turkey. As a result, Gandhi was also supported by certain Pan-Islamic leaders, particularly **Abdul Bari** of Firangi Mahal Ulema group at Lucknow (the religious preceptor of the Ali brothers who were still interned) and some radical members of the Muslim League such as **Dr. M.A. Ansari** (Jinnah had also condemned the Rowlatt Bills). Ansari hailed Gandhi as 'the intrepid leader of India, who has endeared himself as much to the Muslims as to the Hindus.'

Despite strong opposition all over the country, one of the Rowlatt Bills was rushed through the Council between 6th February and 18th March 1919 and passed, though all the non-official members had voted against it. The bill became an Act after receiving Viceroy's assent on 21st March 1919.

Gandhi inaugurated his satyagraha by calling upon the countrymen to observe a day of 'hartal' by striking work and fasting and praying at home in protest against the Rowlatt Act. The date for the hartal was initially fixed for 30th March but later changed to 6th April. The success of the hartal varied considerably throughout the country. In Delhi, a hartal was observed on 30th March and 10 persons were killed in police firing. In all other major towns, the hartal was observed on 6th April. Gandhi described the hartal as a magnificent success and intensified the agitation by urging the satyagrahis to disobey the laws dealing with prohibited literature (since these could be disobeyed without leading to violence). Four books including Hind Swaraj of Gandhi, which were prohibited since 1910, were chosen for sale as an act of defiance.

On 8<sup>th</sup> April, Gandhi left Bombay to promote the agitation in Delhi and Punjab. However, his entry in Punjab was considered dangerous and Gandhi was removed from train at Palwal near Delhi and taken back to Bombay. The news of Gandhi's arrest precipitated the situation and violence broke out at several places. Martial law was enforced in Ahmedabad. The Punjab region as a whole and Amritsar, in particular, witnessed the worst scenes of violence.

### Punjab and Amritsar

Punjab was already seething due to unpopularity of the Punjab administration under Lieutenant Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer (1912–19). It witnessed forced war recruitments, war exactions, severe repression of the Ghadar outbreak (1915) and rise in food grain prices. The remarkable

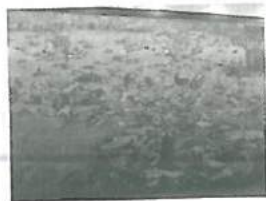


Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity of early 1919 in Punjab also frightened the British. The hartals of 30th March and 6th April in Punjab were peaceful but massive.

On 9<sup>th</sup> April, on Ram Navami, two local Congress leaders of Amritsar—**Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew** and **Dr. Satyapal** were arrested. These arrests coincided with Gandhi's arrest and precipitated the crisis, leading to widespread violence and arson. The town hall and the post office were attacked, telegraph wires were cut and five Europeans were killed. The army was called in and the city was handed over to General Dyer who issued an order prohibiting public meetings and assemblies.

### Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy (Amritsar, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1919)

On 13<sup>th</sup> April, on **Baisakhi day**, a large crowd had assembled at Jallianwala Bagh to protest against the arrests. Most of them were not aware of the ban on meetings as they were visitors from neighbouring villages who were there to attend Baisakhi celebrations. Enraged on seeing the orders flouted, **Brigadier General Reginald Dyer** ordered his Gurkha troops to open fire on the peaceful unarmed crowd, without the slightest warning. The Bagh was enclosed on three sides and had only one exit. The troops fired at the trapped crowd until their ammunition was exhausted. At the end of the shooting, which had continued for 10 minutes, 379 were left dead as per official estimates. As per unofficial estimates, this number was nearly three times higher.



Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

The entire nation was shaken by the brutality at Jallianwala Bagh. Yet, repression was intensified and Punjab was placed under martial law the same day (13<sup>th</sup> night). Acts of repression included indiscriminate arrests, torture, public flogging, aerial bombing, fancy punishments such as crawling on their bellies before Europeans, removal of fans from Indian houses and giving them for use by Europeans, etc.

On 18<sup>th</sup> April, Gandhi called off the satyagraha in view of the widespread violence and confessed it to be a 'Himalayan blunder' to have allowed insufficiently trained people to offer satyagraha. **Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood** on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1919 to register his protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

"The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand shorn of all special distinction, by the side of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings"—

Rabindranath Tagore

### Evaluation of Rowlatt Satyagraha

The Rowlatt Satyagraha was the first all-India satyagraha agitation called by Gandhi and it suffered from several weaknesses and organizational defects. The main focus of Satyagraha Sabha was mainly on publication of propaganda literature and collecting pledge signatures, the Congress was hardly in the picture and people participated mainly owing to their own socio-economic grievances against the British rule. The Congress played a very limited role as it lacked the machinery for

agitational politics in most parts of India then. Gandhi himself called it a "**Himalayan Blunder**" to have asked people to join in this agitation even as they were not sufficiently trained for a non-violent struggle.

Despite very limited preparation, the April 1919 agitation turned out to be the biggest and the most violent upsurge India had seen since 1857. Rowlatt disturbances included sporadic attacks on government buildings, on telegraph lines and occasionally on Whites. But the repression was far more violent, brutal and ruthless. The movement was more intense in cities than in rural areas.

However, the main significance of Rowlatt satyagraha lay in the forceful emergence of Gandhi on the national political scene. That the people rallied behind Gandhi was quite evident from the massive participation of people in Punjab, a region Gandhi had not even visited before the movement. From this point onwards, Gandhi emerged as the new Messiah of the Indian masses and dominated Indian politics down to 1947.

**Saifuddin Kitchlew (1888–1963):** He was a lawyer and a Muslim nationalist leader. He is most remembered for leading a protest in Punjab against the Rowlatt Act after which he along with Dr. Satyapal were arrested and secretly sent to Dharmashala. A public meeting organised in protest of these arrests led to the most unfortunate Jallianwala Bagh massacre (April 1919). Kitchlew was a founder member of the **Naujawan Bharat Sabha** (Indian Youth Congress) as well as **Jamia Milia Islamia**. He founded the Urdu daily **Tanzim** as well as the **Swaraj Ashram** (Amritsar, 1921). Kitchlew strongly opposed the demand for Pakistan, shifted to Delhi after his house was burnt down during the partition riots. Sometime after independence, he left the Congress party, moved closer to the Communist party of India was recipient of the Stalin Peace Prize in 1952.

### GANDHI AND HIS IDEOLOGY

Gandhi's ideology evolved out of several influences. In his autobiography, **My Experiments with Truth**, he states that his parents and his family's socio-religious milieu left a deep impact on him, particularly the values of Jainism and Vaishnavism. Teachings of the Bhagwat Geeta and Jainism influenced his early thought. The writings of Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin were significant influences in his later life. Finally, his own experiences played a key role in giving final shape to his ideology.

The fundamental principles of Gandhian ideology were satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), asteya (non-stealing), aparigraha (non-possession) and brahmacharya (self-control). Gandhi advocated that the weapons of satya and ahimsa be used to gain freedom for India. From satya, he derived the technique of satyagraha (literally, persistence in truth) which sought to convert the adversary to one's own side. From the principle of ahimsa, he derived the technique of non-violent struggle. Gandhi maintained that non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute.

In the book *Thoughts of Nehru*, Gandhi and Tagore, scholar Brij Kishore Goyal observes that the very nature of Gandhian thought is spiritualistic. Gandhi believed that the spiritual side is



Mahatma Gandhi



the permanent side of human nature. That by following the path of truth, love and non-violence, one will get true freedom i.e. spiritual freedom. Gandhi had remarked, "the mundane affairs of life should be so governed, the material side of life should be so led, the bodily requirements should be so met that the man is enabled to secure the development of his spiritual side, and thus achieve the spiritual freedom which alone is his goal."

"As the microcosm, so the macrocosm" - this idea prevailed throughout his thought and action. He believed in leading by example and insisted that principles should be practiced by oneself first, before one can motivate others to follow them.

As far as Gandhian method was concerned, it was highly empirical and pragmatic. A man of action, Gandhi believed in trial and error and learning by committing mistakes. US Mohan Rao states that, "while Gandhi's belief in fundamental principles like truth and non-violence was unshakable, his application of these principles was governed by a continuous process of experimentation and developed by practice; and that his methods of conflict-resolution had no finality about them and could be improved by further experimentations."

Gandhi has often been criticised for living in a world of ideas that had no relevance in the real world. Contrary to this, Gandhi preached only what he practiced. He developed his philosophy based on his own experiences in life and aptly named his autobiography *The Storey of My Experiments with Truth*. The chief aspects of Gandhian ideology may be discussed under the following heads.

## Satyagraha

Satyagraha was the chief aspect of Gandhian ideology. Literally it means persistence of truth or 'true force'. Satyagraha was evolved by Gandhi in South Africa and later used as a dominant tool in India's freedom struggle from 1919 onwards. In satyagraha, the aim was to insist on truth and make the enemy see one's own point of view by 'self-suffering' and not by violence. This may be done variously by showing passive resistance or civil disobedience to authority, by non-cooperation with evil, by fasting, striking, marching, etc. As a result, a satyagrahi would not seek to vindicate the truth by violent means, rather he would wean the opponent from error by patience and sympathy.

For Gandhi, satyagraha was not merely a political tool but an integral part of his philosophy of life and action. He believed that the search for truth was the goal of human life and that since no one could know the ultimate Truth, one should never attack another's integrity or prevent another's search for truth. While distinguishing between satyagraha and passive resistance, Gandhi had clarified that satyagraha excluded the use of violence in any shape, whereas passive resistance did not.

The superiority of satyagraha over violent means lies in the fact that it leaves no bitterness as its aftermath. Instead, it only leaves goodwill between the oppressor and the oppressed. Though the principle of returning good for evil is not new and has been practiced by many thinkers and preachers including Buddha and Christ, Gandhi's contribution lies in the fact that he brought satyagraha out from merely personal life to larger public life. He made satyagraha a tool for social,

political and economic problems which was a truly original and novel contribution. The critics of Gandhi have also pointed out that Gandhi used satyagraha techniques to control the mass movements from above. Nonetheless, it was satyagraha that succeeded in bringing almost all sections of Indian society together, like never before, to join the freedom struggle.

- **P. Sitaramayya**, "Satyagraha involves self-chosen suffering and humiliation for the resisters. It is effective, it is so by working on the conscience of those against whom it is being used, sapping their confidence in the exclusive rightness of their cause making their physical strength important, and weakening their resolution by insinuating a sense of guilt for the suffering they have part in causing."
- **Stanley Jones**, "the satyagrahi bears no ill-will or hatred against the evil-doer, he tries to overcome hatred and anger by love, evil by good, untruth by truth and hinsa by ahinsa. Possessing faith in the existence of the soul behind the physical exterior and striking directly at it, the satyagrahi thus values soul force as the most important component in his arsenal."

## Ahinsa

Non-violence formed the basis of satyagraha. According to Gandhi, "when a person claims to be non-violent, he is expected not to be angry with one who has injured him. He will not wish him harm, he will not wish him well...He will put up with all the injury to which he is subjected by the wrong doer. Thus, non-violence is complete innocence. Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill will against all that lives."

Further, Gandhi would say that "non-violence is the law of human species as violence is the law of the brute. The history of mankind shows that man has been steadily progressing towards ahinsa. Had it been otherwise, the human species would have been extinct by now even as many lower species have disappeared." He added, "Non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish, it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature".

Gandhi also gave reasons why non-violence should be preferred over violence. First, the non-violent struggle is always conducted gracefully and with a minimum of bitterness; it does not lead to brutalisation of humanity as a violent war does. Second, the non-violent warrior is always prepared for negotiation and compromise. Third, non-violence renders useless the weapons of violent warfare which the enemy has and makes his position difficult. Fourth, the use of moral weapon of non-violence ennoble both the sides. Finally, in a non-violent struggle, the victory of the satyagrahi is certain as he fights on the side of God.

Gandhi also insisted that his was the non-violence of the brave and not the coward. However, sometimes he took a stand which fell short of complete non-violence. For instance, Gandhi is also quoted to have said that violence was preferable to cowardly surrender to injustice. That violence offered in self-defence or the defence of the defenceless is an act of bravery. Such statements often created delicate problems of interpretation. During the First World War, Gandhi also campaigned for military recruitments in the hope of gaining concessions from the British government after the war which again cannot be easily reconciled with the doctrine of non-violence.



## Swaraj

Swaraj comes from 'swa-raj', meaning self-rule. In other words, it refers to popular sovereignty where people govern themselves. Gandhi believed in this concept of popular sovereignty and was of the view that as people get the government they deserve, self-government can come only through self-effort. He used to say, "people are the roots, the state is the fruit. If the roots are sweet, the fruits are bound to be sweet."

For Gandhi, Swaraj of his dreams was the poor man's Swaraj. A true democrat, he wanted to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, the weak and the strong. He was of the view that basic amenities should be similarly available to all in society.

**Hind Swaraj:** It comprised a body of ideas which Gandhi illustrated in his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909). In this work, Gandhi pointed out that the real enemy was not the British rule but the modern western civilisation which was luring India into its stranglehold. He criticised the railways for contributing to plague and famine (by export of food grains). Though criticised as obscurantist, these ideas reflected the adverse effects of 'modernisation' on the masses in the countryside. Thus, here he saw Swaraj or self-rule as a state of life which could only exist where Indians followed their traditional life uncorrupted by modern ways.

Later on, Gandhi's ideas of Hind Swaraj evolved to include his programme of village reconstruction, promotion of Khadi and Harijan welfare, bringing the need for socio-economic reconstruction to the very vortex of nation's attention.

## Swadeshi

Gandhi also stood for Swadeshi, meaning the use of things made in one's own country. This was particularly aimed at replacing the machine made foreign cloth with handmade cloth as a solution to poverty of peasants who could spin at home to supplement their income and as a solution to drain of wealth from India in payments for imported cloth.

It may be noted that despite Gandhi's opposition to western influences, he was not particularly opposed to the emerging modern industries in India. In fact, he had good relations with industrialists like Ambalal Sarabhai and GD Birla. He believed in the interdependence of capital and labour and advocated that the capitalists should consider themselves as 'trustees' of the workers (Gandhi's trusteeship theory). He was not in favour of politicisation of workers along class lines and denounced militant economic struggles.

## Sarvodaya

Literally, sarvodaya means the upliftment of all. According to Gandhi, it refers to the welfare of all secured by the conscious effort of everyone in the community. He stated that a believer of sarvodaya will strive for the greatest good for all and die in the attempt to achieve this ideal.

**Views on Ideal State and Ideal Society-Ram Rajya & Sarvodaya Society:** Gandhi envisioned Ram Rajya as an ideal society. For him, it implied a system of "cooperative commonwealth

and statelessness". He rejected the state because it is rooted in violence in so far as it is highly centralised system and such a system cannot be sustained without some measure of force and violence. He said, "I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress."

Gandhi agreed with **Thoreau** that that government is the best which governs the least. To Gandhi, the prime function of the state was the regulation of social behaviour. In an ideal society or Ram Raj, there would be no need for an external authority to regulate the behaviour of individuals. They would be self-disciplined and would never act against the interest of another member. Here it may be remembered that Gandhi's rejection of the state was on moral grounds and not on the communist ground that the state promotes capitalism.

Gandhi envisioned that an ideal stateless society would consist of villages that would function on the basis of voluntary cooperation. Every village would be a republic or panchayat with full powers. Such a society would represent perfect democracy. They would be organised into a loose federation on the basis of morality and not force. Being a practical idealist, Gandhi realized that an ideal stateless society was not viable due to human weaknesses, so the next best alternative had to suffice, that is, not a wholly non-violent society but a predominantly non-violent one.

Like Kant, Gandhi also felt that individual is the end, state is the means. But individual freedom cannot exist at the cost of similar freedom of others. Thus, an individual must enjoy his freedom within limits. He must exercise restraint on his freedom in order to allow others to enjoy their own freedom. Clearly for him, duties were more important than rights and inner development of individual was possible only through discharging of social obligation.

Thus, Gandhi idealised **stateless and classless** society of self-sufficient villages based on non-violence instead of force, on service instead of exploitation and renunciation instead of acquisitiveness. Gandhi named the ideal society as sarvodaya society—a stateless society where social life would become so perfect as to be self-regulated. Being a practical idealist, Gandhi also realized that Sarvodaya Society could not come into existence immediately, so practically it was best to continue with the existing model and continuously improve it with the noble ideas of sarvodaya.

## Other Ideas of Gandhi

### On Religion

For Gandhi, religion was the struggle for truth. According to him, religion could not be confined to the realm of private opinion alone but must influence and **permeate all activities** of men. A devout Hindu himself, Gandhi's religious outlook was not narrow but universalist. He wanted Indians to be deeply rooted in their own culture but at the same time acquire the good things from other cultures.

He would say, "I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."



### On Decentralisation

Gandhi idealised the end of centralisation since it was incompatible with individual freedom. Also, it could not be sustained without force. So, for a predominantly non-violent society, there must be decentralisation. The villages should have the largest measure of autonomy in managing their affairs. Every individual should be able to participate in the governance process.

### On Economic Decentralisation

It refers to replacing centralised large-scale industries with cottage industries. Gandhi felt that modern centralised industrialisation has led to division of society into haves and have-nots, and makes people insensitive to sufferings of others. It has led to the rise of colonialism and the mad rush for accumulation of more and more wealth. So, man's pursuit for higher values is possible only in a system of cottage industries in which workers own the means of production. In brief, introducing cottage industries was the best method to end exploitation of man by man and infuse principle of satya and ahinsa in the economic field.

### On Varna System and Non-possession

Gandhi took a **favourable view of the varna system**. To him, it implied equality of all professions as well as equal earning of all professions. He felt that every person should follow his hereditary profession as a duty to society and not as a way of amassing wealth. This would end unworthy competition and remove distinction of high and low. This would also enable the person to improve his skills and increase the income of society. Gandhi, like Buddha believed that miseries of life were due to multiplication of wants and hence recommended reduction of wants. Non-possession or aparigraha is an ancient principle for leading a contented life and attaining liberation. Gandhi's originality lies in extending its meaning and application.

### On Democracy

Gandhi defined democracy as, "the art and science of mobilising the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all." Thus, democracy was not just a political value for Gandhi, it was also a social and economic value. For him, it was not just about representative democracy, majority rule or greatest good of the greatest number. Instead, he idealised true individual democracy and greatest good of all. In his view, certain conditions were necessary for the success of democracy, such as-discipline, obedience to laws, selflessness, tolerance, citizen empowerment and alert citizen opinion or participation.

### On Education

Gandhi defined education as an all-round development of an individual's **body, mind and spirit**. By development of spirit, he meant teaching the heart to feel. At the same time, he stressed that the main aim of education should be employability. He was of the view that education which does not equip a person with the skills to earn, is a sheer waste. Gandhi also supported state funding of education. The state should provide free and compulsory primary education and should educate all those whose services it needs.

The Wardha Scheme: The Wardha Scheme was a scheme of indigenous education **proposed by Gandhi** in 1937 and published in the Harijan. It was a scheme for **Basic Education**. The main principle of the scheme was 'learning by activity'. It was a seven-year course to be taught in the pupils' mother tongue. The details of Wardha Scheme were further worked out by Zakir Hussain Committee but the scheme had to be postponed due to the resignation of Congress Ministries in 1939. He rejected colonial education and felt that it blocked channels of creative energy and destroyed 'cultural common sense' in India.

### On Status of Women

Gandhi severely criticised all forms of discrimination against women. He rejected views of Manu that "for woman there can be no freedom." He stood for **perfect equality** between men and women. He would say that a woman is a companion of man, equal in all aspects. A woman has an equal right to life and liberty as a man. He rejected the notion of women as 'weaker sex'. He declared that, "to call women the weaker sex is a libel. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed a woman is less brute than a man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior."

He also severely criticised all sorts of social disabilities imposed on women such as child marriage, dowry, purdah, enforced widowhood and devdasi system (temple prostitution). He advocated full protection of women in social, political and economic spheres. He demanded equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Time and again, he urged women to join the Indian National Movement. In fact, he felt that women were better suited for a non-violent struggle and the satyagraha protest. As a result of Gandhi's efforts, the period witnesses a massive participation of women in India's freedom struggle and became the single most significant factor in changing the role and status of women in Indian society. Some important women leaders who emerged during this time were-Kasturba Gandhi, Kamala Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya and Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur.

### On Untouchability

Gandhi denounced untouchability as "crime against humanity". "None can be born untouchable as all are sparks of one and the same divine fire." He therefore named the untouchables as the Harijans, i.e. the people of God. He felt that untouchability is a disease that has struck Hinduism through the ages. If untouchability lived, Hinduism and India would die. Gandhi's efforts against untouchability, along with that of others, ultimately resulted in abolition of untouchability in Indian Constitution under Article 17.

To sum up, Gandhian ideology have been a subject of much debate and controversy, particularly with regard to its relevance in today's world, and has evoked different reactions from different people. All the same, his ideas deeply influenced the course of our freedom struggle and laid down its major thrust and direction.



Workers on strike in support of Gandhi



**SPECIAL NOTE—MASS MOBILISATION UNDER GANDHI**

The entry of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into the freedom struggle of India proved to be a turning point. The national movement acquired a distinct ideological orientation under his leadership. In a short span of time, he became the undisputed leader of the Congress as well as the masses. Under Gandhi's leadership, the Indian National Movement became a movement of the masses for the first time. This was because Gandhi had a huge mass appeal. His life, personality and ideology influenced almost all sections of Indian society.

Gandhi was of the view that freedom for India could come only with the active participation of the masses. He based the freedom struggle on the basic premise that the masses are the subjects and not objects of politics. Hence, Gandhi tried to bridge the gap between the leaders and the led. He chose the middle path between the Moderates and the Extremists and was able to strike the right balance between organization and spontaneity. He was responsible for making the Congress Party more democratic and brought it closer to the masses. This attitude of Gandhi also fostered healthy and democratic relations among leaders themselves. Finally, the bedrock of his politics was his immense faith in the capacity of the masses, their courage and moral strength.

**Gandhi's Methods of Mass Mobilisation**

The Gandhian methods proved quite effective as methods of mass mobilisation. He first experimented with them in South Africa and later applied them successfully to India's freedom struggle. He incorporated the following methods of mass mobilisation:

- 1. Careful training of disciplined cadres:** Gandhi undertook careful training of his cadres at Sabarmati Ashram.
- 2. Method of Satyagraha:** It involved peaceful violation of unjust laws, passive resistance or civil disobedience, peaceful marches, courting arrest, etc.
- 3. Social Reform or Constructive Program:** Gandhi stressed on social reform to strengthen the Indian society. He would point to five fingers of his hand and ask people to observe five virtues—spinning, ending untouchability, non-consumption of alcohol, Hindu-Muslim amity and gender equality.

Through these methods, Gandhi transformed the Congress Movement into a mass movement.

According to Sumit Sarkar, Gandhi's methods included a combination of quixotic ways with meticulous planning, negotiation skills, willingness to compromise and cultivation of Gandhian 'Fads' (vegetarianism, nature cure, sexual restraint, etc.). Through this, he was able to involve the masses during movements and at the same time keep their energies directed towards predetermined, peaceful ways in other times.

**What made Gandhi a Mass Leader?**

A combination of factors contributed to the rise of Gandhi as a mass leader and may be discussed as under:

- 1. Role of 'rumour':** According to Sumit Sarkar, rumour played its role in the backdrop of largely illiterate, poor and miserable society. Gandhi came to be known as a Mahatma, a holy man, a sage with miracle powers. A CID report on the kisan movement in Allahabad in 1921 states that, "The currency which Mr. Gandhi's name has acquired even in the remotest villages is astonishing. No one seems to know who or what he is, but it is an accepted fact that what he says is so, and what he orders must be done." In this way, peasants could imagine that Gandhi could end zamindari exploitation and labourers could imagine that he could provide land holdings to them.
- 2. Historical necessity for a 'saviour from above':** Scholars argue that popular perceptions about Gandhi were also shaped by a historical necessity. That the masses needed to be represented by a saviour from above and Gandhi filled this need. In the 1920s, many local leaders emerged but they needed a national level guiding force. This is explained by what happened at Pratapgarh—Baba Ramchandra gave leadership to the masses at the local level and got bedakhali (forced eviction) stopped. Gandhi or the Congress leadership had little to do with it directly. Yet, he attributed his success to Gandhi.
- 3. Gandhi's political strategy:** Bipan Chandra attributes Gandhi's popularity to his political strategy. He writes that Gandhi was a political leader and it was through his political practice that he was able to move the masses into political action. Further, he writes that Gandhi's political strategy was guided by a deep understanding of the nature of British rule and the nature of Indian masses. He realized that the British had consciously nurtured political passivity in the masses for a stable colonial rule. So, Gandhi aimed to win the hearts and minds of the masses and instil in them a national consciousness. He declared: "people can have Swaraj for the asking when they have attained the power to take it." He aimed to bring the masses from remote corners of India onto the vortex of National politics.  
The British had also nurtured twin notions of 'benevolence' and 'invincibility' of the British rule. Gandhi attacked both these notions. He attacked 'benevolence' by exposing the exploitative nature of the colonial rule. He attacked 'invincibility' by introducing law-breaking mass movements. In this way, Gandhi's political strategy contributed to his popularity, according to Chandra.
- 4. Long drawn nature of Gandhian struggle:** Bipan Chandra adds that the long-drawn nature of Gandhi's struggle also contributed to his popularity. During the 'passive phases', he carried out intense ideological work. This involved training the masses for nationalist struggle, inculcating national consciousness and capacity building of the masses in general. As a result, he was able to produce thousands of full-time workers who devoted their entire lives to the freedom struggle.



- 5. Gandhi's Constructive Programme:** Gandhi's constructive program was built around spinning and khadi, village industries, boycott of foreign goods and liquor. It was also centred on social reform such as upliftment of the poor, women and Harijans, Hindu-Muslim unity, etc. This constructive program helped in sustaining his mass movements in many ways. During the passive phase of a movement, constructive work helped in diverting the energies of the masses into productive work. It also gave them a sense of continued activism. Further, the constructive program of Gandhi could involve the masses as opposed to parliamentary efforts which could be carried out by only a few.
- 6. Role of Ahinsa and participation of Women:** Gandhi's struggle was essentially a non-violent struggle. He had adopted ahinsa as a matter of principle. This was another reason for his popularity as the masses could join a non-violent struggle while the same was not possible for a violent-armed struggle. This was particularly true in the case of women.



### Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

- Where did Mahatma Gandhi start his Civil Disobedience Movement from in 1930?  
[UPSC 1995]  
(a) Sevagram (b) Dandi  
(c) Sabarmati (d) Wardha
- What was The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crime Act 1919 popular known as?  
[UPSC 1996]  
(a) Rowlatt Act (b) Pitt's India Act  
(c) Indian Arms Act (d) Ilbert Bill
- What was the first venture by Gandhi in all India politics?  
[UPSC 1999]  
(a) Non-Cooperation Movement  
(b) Rowlatt Satyagraha  
(c) Champaran Movement  
(d) Dandi March
- Where did Gandhiji launch his first successful Satyagraha after returning from South Africa?  
[UPSC 2000]  
(a) Chauri Chaura (b) Dandi  
(c) Champaran (d) Bardoli
- What was the name of the famous person of India who returned the Knighthood conferred on him by the British government as a token of protest against atrocities in Punjab in 1919?  
[UPSC 2004]  
(a) Tej Bahadur Sapru  
(b) Ashutosh Mukherjee  
(c) Rabindranath Tagore  
(d) Syed Ahmed Khan
- Which of the following pairs are correctly matched?  
[UPSC 2005]  

Movement/ Satyagraha	Person actively associated with
1. Champaran	Rajendra Prasad
2. Ahmedabad mill workers	Morarji Desai
3. Kheda	Vallabhbhai Patel

Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3
- Which one of the following aroused a wave of popular indignation that led to the massacre by the British at Jallianwala Bagh?  
[UPSC 2007]  
(a) The Arms Act  
(b) The Public Safety Act  
(c) The Rowlatt Act  
(d) The Vernacular Press Act
- At which one of the following places did Mahatma Gandhi first start his Satyagraha in India?  
[UPSC 2007]  
(a) Ahmedabad (b) Bardoli  
(c) Champaran (d) Kheda

- Who among the following Gandhian followers was a teacher by profession?  
[UPSC 2008]  
(a) A N Sinha  
(b) Braj Kishore Prasad  
(c) J.B. Kriplani  
(d) Rajendra Prasad
- Who was the Viceroy of India when the Rowlatt Act was passed?  
[UPSC 2008]  
(a) Lord Irwin (b) Lord Reading  
(c) Lord Chelmsford (d) Lord Wavell
- During the Indian freedom struggle, why did Rowlatt Act arouse popular indignation?  
[UPSC 2009]  
(a) It curtailed the freedom of religion  
(b) It suppressed the Indian traditional education  
(c) It authorised the government to imprison people without trial  
(d) It curbed the trade union activities
- Who among the following founded the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association?  
[UPSC 2009]  
(a) Mahatma Gandhi  
(b) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel  
(c) N.M. Joshi  
(d) J.B. Kriplani
- Consider the following statements:  
[UPSC 2010]  
1. Dr Rajendra Prasad persuaded Mahatma Gandhi to come to Champaran to investigate the problem of peasants  
2. Acharya J.B. Kriplani was one of Mahatma Gandhi's colleagues in his Champaran investigation. Which of the statements given above is / are correct?  
Choose the correct answer from the following options.  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Mahatma Gandhi said that some of his deepest convictions were reflected in a book titled, "Unto the Last" and the book transformed his life. What was the message from the book that transformed Mahatma Gandhi?  
[UPSC 2011]  
(a) Uplifting the oppressed and poor is the moral responsibility of an educated man  
(b) The good of individual is contained in the good of all  
(c) The life of celibacy and spiritual pursuit are essential for a noble life  
(d) All the statements (a), (b) and (c) are correct in this context
- What was the reason for Mahatma Gandhi to organise a Satyagraha on behalf of the peasants of Kheda?  
[UPSC 2011]  
1. The administration did not suspend the land revenue collection in spite of a drought.  
2. The administration proposed to introduce Permanent Settlement in Gujarat.  
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
(a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
- What was the aim of the Rowlatt Act?  
[UPSC 2012]  
(a) Compulsory economic support to war efforts  
(b) Imprisonment without trial and summary procedures for trial  
(c) Suppression of the Khilafat movement  
(d) Imposition of restrictions on freedom of the press
- With reference to Rowlatt Satyagraha, which of the following statements is / are correct?  
[UPSC 2015]  
1. The Rowlatt Act was based on the recommendations of the Sedition Committee.



2. In Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhiji tried to utilise the Home Rule League
3. Demonstrations against the arrival of Simon Commission coincided with Rowlatt Satyagraha.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3



## Previous Years' Questions – Main Exam

1. Point out clearly the contributions of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore to the social and cultural life of India. [UPSC 1984]
2. "Mahatma Gandhi's succession during 1916-20, in getting the technique of non violent Satyagraha accepted by the nation as a weapon of struggle against the British was phenomenal." Elucidate. [UPSC 1993]
3. Trace the emergence of Gandhiji in Indian political scene till the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917. What was the basic philosophy of Satyagraha enunciated by him? [UPSC 1994]
4. Discuss Mahatma Gandhi's concept of 'Basic Education'. How far is it a departure from conventional system of education? [UPSC 1997]
5. What do you know about Rowlatt Act? [UPSC 1997]
6. Write a short note on: Satyagraha. [UPSC 2002]



## Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. Consider the following statements-
  1. Gandhian style of politics was based on inclusivism.
  2. Gandhian thoughts of morality are based on class based society of India rather than religious diversity of India.
  3. Mahatma Gandhi was critical of western industrial capitalism.

Which of the above statements is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 2 (d) 1 and 3

2. Which of the following mentioned methods was not a method of mass mobilization adopted by Gandhi?

- (a) satyagraha  
(b) training of agitators  
(c) petitions and memorials  
(d) social reform

3. Consider the following statements in context of the Rowlatt Act-

1. Rowlatt Act was passed in March 1919 even though every single Indian Central member of the Indian legislative Council opposed it.
2. Rowlatt Act authorised the British government to imprison any person without trial and conviction in a court of law.
2. Rowlatt Act authorised the British Government to suspend the right of habeas corpus, which had been the foundation of civil liberties in Britain.

Which of the above statements are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) All are correct  
(b) 1 and 2  
(c) 2 and 3  
(d) None of the above

4. Gandhi's first act of struggle in South Africa was directed against which one of the following?

- (a) Compulsory registration of Indians  
(b) Poll tax  
(c) Invalidation of Hindu marriages  
(d) Bill to disenfranchise Indians

5. Consider the following statements about Gandhiji in South Africa-

1. Gandhiji's political activities from 1894 to 1906 are classified as the moderate phase of the struggle for South African Indians.
2. He set up Natal Indian Congress and started a paper called 'Indian Opinion'.
3. The second phase of the struggle in South Africa began in 1906, was characterised by the use of the method named satyagraha.

4. South Africa provided Gandhi an opportunity for evolving his own style of politics and leadership.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 2, 3 and 4  
(c) 1, 2, 3 and 4 (d) 1, 4 and 2

6. Where did Gandhi face overt racial humiliation for the first time?

- (a) England (b) South Africa  
(c) India (d) Germany

7. Assertion (A)-Kheda Satyagraha was organised in 1918 when the crops failed due to drought and authorities refused remission.

Reason (R)-According to revenue code, if the yield was less than one-fourth of normal produce, farmers were entitled to remission.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.  
(b) Both A and R are true and R is not the correct explanation of A.  
(c) A is true but R is false.  
(d) A is false but R is true.

8. 1. The Wardha Scheme was a scheme of higher education.  
2. It was published in a series of articles in Indian opinion.  
3. It was a scheme of 'learning by doing'.  
4. Its final details were worked out by Zakir Hussain Committee.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 only (d) 2 and 4

9. 1. It was to protest against the 'Rowlatt' Act that Gandhi launched an all-India Satyagraha for the first time.  
2. Rowlatt Bill was an attempt to make war-time restrictions on civil rights permanent.



With regard to the Rowlatt Act, which of the above statements is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) both (d) neither

10. After returning from South Africa, what did Gandhi involve himself with during his first year in India?

1. Touring India
2. Directing the Home Rule movement
3. Organising local agitations
4. Setting up Ahmedabad Ashram

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 3 and 4  
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1 and 4

11. 1. Kheda-Indulal Yajnik

2. Ahmedabad-1<sup>st</sup> act of civil disobedience by Gandhi
3. Champaran-tinkathia system

Which of the above pairs is/are incorrectly matched? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 only  
(c) 2 only (d) 2 and 3

12. Which of the given constituted an ideal state according to Gandhi?

1. Ram Raj
2. Cooperative commonwealth and statelessness
3. Self-regulated state
4. Autonomous villages in a loose federation

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 1, 2 and 3  
(c) 2, 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4



## Practice Questions – Main Exam

1. What are the various factors that contributed to the emergence of Gandhi as a mass leader in India's Freedom Struggle? Support your answer by discussing the views of prominent scholars. (100 words)
2. Discuss the significance of Gandhi's experiences in South Africa? How did they contribute to the shaping of his political strategy? (100 words)
3. "The local agitations at Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad served as a demonstration of Gandhian politics and techniques. They helped Gandhi find his feet among Indians and study their problems first hand." Examine critically. (100 words)
4. Write short notes on the following aspects of Gandhian ideology (20 words)-
  1. Satyagraha
  2. Ahimsa
  3. Swaraj
  4. Gandhi's views on ideal state and ideal society
5. "The Rowlatt Satyagraha was the first all-India satyagraha agitation called by Gandhi." In the context of the above statement, evaluate the significance of Rowlatt Satyagraha? (100 words)

## Answers

### Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

- |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (b)  | 2. (a)  | 3. (b)  | 4. (c)  | 5. (c)  |
| 6. (c)  | 7. (c)  | 8. (c)  | 9. (c)  | 10. (c) |
| 11. (c) | 12. (a) | 13. (b) | 14. (d) | 15. (a) |
| 16. (b) | 17. (b) |         |         |         |

### Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- |         |         |        |        |         |
|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. (d)  | 2. (c)  | 3. (a) | 4. (d) | 5. (c)  |
| 6. (b)  | 7. (a)  | 8. (a) | 9. (c) | 10. (d) |
| 11. (c) | 12. (d) |        |        |         |