

RISE OF MAHATMA GANDHI

For HPAS PRELIMS AND MAINS

EMERGENCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI

GANDHIJI'S EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA (1892-1914)

- In **1893**, at **age 24**, Gandhiji was the **first Indian barrister to have arrived in South Africa**. He had gone there on a year's contract with **Dada Abdulla and Co.** but ended up **struggle against racial discrimination (apartheid) in South Africa and fought for the rights of Indian Community**.

GANDHIJI'S FIRST RACIAL HUMILIATION:

- Gandhiji's first faced **racial humiliation** while travelling from **Durban to Pretoria** by train.
- He had bought a **first-class ticket** but in spite of that he was roughed up and **thrown out of the first-class compartment by a White Man** and left to spend the night shivering in waiting room.
- When he **reached Johannesburg**, he **could not get a room in any of the hotels as they were meant to serve only the Whites**.
- Consequent to this humiliation faced by him, he **called a meeting of Indians upon reaching Pretoria** and encouraged them to learn English, organise themselves and protest against such oppressions.
- However, it was the **proposed bill of Natal Government to disfranchise Indians**, which finally compelled Gandhiji to launch his struggle in South Africa.
- Consequently, even before coming to India, Gandhiji experimented with his methodologies of passive resistance and satyagraha in South Africa.
- His political activism in South Africa can be broadly divided into two phases:
 - a. **Moderate Approach (1892-1906)**
 - b. **Extremist Approach (1906-1914)**

GANDHIJI'S MODERATE APPROACH IN SOUTH AFRICA (1894-1906)

A. STRUGGLE AGAINST DISENFRANCHISEMENT BILL & FORMATION OF INDIAN NATAL ORGANIZATION:

- Just when Gandhiji was about to go back India, he read the news regarding Disfranchisement Bill.
- Gandhiji decided to postpone his return and began **formulating a Plan of action against the bill**.
- As a result, **Gandhiji's first struggle in South Africa** was launched **against Disfranchisement Bill of Natal Government**.
- Led by Gandhiji, 400 Indians living in Natal submitted a petition against the Bill. When the Bill passed despite Indian opposition, Gandhiji 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 by the Queen.
- Taking note of strong opposition, the Colonial office in London vetoed the Bill on the grounds that it discriminated against the inhabitants of another part of British Empire.
- However, despite this veto, the Natal Government achieved its objective by passing the Bill in an amended form.

B. GADHIJI VOLUNTEERS DURING BOER WAR (1899-1902):

- Boers were South Africans of Dutch origin. They were fighting British.
- Though neither of the two parties had treated the Indians well, yet Gandhiji raised a group of stretcher-bearers as **the Natal Indian Ambulance Corps (1899)**.
- It is presumed that this was done to disapprove the British stereotype that Hindus were not fit for 'manly' work.
- Soon the British won the war and **Gandhiji's efforts were liberally praised by English Newspapers**.

3. PHOENIX SETTLEMENT (1904):

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- Inspired by **John Ruskin's book** on economics – '**Unto the Last**', Gandhiji hit upon the idea of starting a farm and leading a simple community life.
- In **1904**, he and his associates shifted to a farm known as **Phoenix Farm** situated in Phoenix near Durban, 'Indian Opinion' was also shifted to the farm, complete with press and office.
- Inhabitants of Phoenix gradually became chief participants of Gandhiji's Satyagraha protests.

4. OTHER IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA:

- During this period Gandhi formed **Natal Indian Congress** and started the journal called '**Indian Opinion**' (**1903**) with an objective to raise concerns about the plight of British Indian subjects in South Africa.
- The **Indian Opinion** soon became the mouthpiece of Gandhiji's struggle. It was **published every week in English and Gujarati** and was edited by **Mansukhlal Naazar**.
- He professed loyalty to British Crown and wrote letters and petitions hoping to bring a favourable turnaround in British policies in south Africa towards the Indian working class in plantations, mining, etc. This approach **yielded limited dividend** and failed to achieve any major concessions from British. Gandhiji therefore decided to change his strategy and entered into an extremist phase which began from 1906.

GANDHIJI'S EXTREMIST APPROACH IN SOUTH AFRICA (1906-1917)

Gandhiji's Second Phase began with the first use of **passive resistance or civil disobedience or satyagraha**. Gandhiji had **deep faith in British sense of justice until, in 1906, the government of Transvaal (neighbouring province of Natal) proposed a bill to further humiliate Indians.**

1. STRUGGLE AGAINST ASIATIC REGISTRATION BILL & FORMATION OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE ASSOCIATION (1906-14)

- **Asiatic Registration Bill** proposed compulsory registration of Indians. Whoever failed to register within the window period given would be guilty of an offence and liable to punishment.
- Further an **Indian could be asked for to produce his registration certificate anytime. Police was also permitted to enter into an Indian's house & check for the papers.**
- Gandhiji led a **protest** against this bill, but **in vain**.
- He felt the compelled to evolve a new technique – Satyagraha, or insistence on truth, to protest against the new law.
- Consequently, he **founded Passive Resistance Association (1906)** with the aim of uniting Indians to **boycott** the permit offices.
- As a result, Gandhiji **first used Satyagraha / Civil Disobedience against Asiatic Registration Bill.**
- The boycott proved to be huge success and the Transvaal authorities failed to exhort Indians to get themselves registered.
- On last date of registration, many satyagrahis including Gandhiji willingly went to jail and their number swelled to 155.
- The secretary for colonies – **General Smuts** offered to withdraw Legislation if Indians voluntarily registered themselves. Gandhiji accepted the proposal but was betrayed when Smuts backed out from his words and did not withdraw the legislation.

2. SETTING UP TOLSTOY FARM (1910):

- As Satyagrahis continued to court arrest, funds for supporting the **families of satyagrahis started running out.**
- Gandhiji then set up **Tolstoy Farm (1910) to house the families of satyagrahis.**
- **Financial support** for this task was provided by several people and organizations such as **Hermann Kallenbach** (Gandhiji's German Architect Friend), Sir **Ratanji Tata**, **Nizam of Hyderabad**, **Congress & Muslim League**.

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3. WIDENED SATYAGRAHA (1913-14)

- During 1911-12, coinciding with the coronation of King George V, a brief agreement was reached between government and Indians. Satyagrahis halted their protest during this time.
- But when the promise was not kept, they resumed their struggle in 1913. It included the protest against the following:
 - Asiatic Registration Act
 - Poll Tax: Poll tax of 3 pounds was levied on all ex-indentured labourers who earned barely 10 shillings a month.
 - Immigration Law
 - A Supreme Court Judgement invalidating all marriages not conducted according to Christian rites and not registered.

SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT CONCEDES TO GANDHIJI

- Amidst vehement opposition by Satyagrahis and support from India as well, a series of negotiations were held involving **Gandhiji, Hardinge, General Smuts** and **CF Andrews**.
- A compromise was finally reached and the government of South Africa conceded to major Indian demands.

DEMANDS CONCEDED:

- General Smuts passed **India Relief Act 1914** to abolish poll tax on freed labourers.
- Marriages performed as per Indian rites were declared legal.
- Domicile certificate was now required only to '**enter**' the Union of South Africa

SIGNIFICANCE OF GANDHIJI'S EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

- It made him **aware of futility of moderate strategies** in any struggle against British.
- He **perfected his strategy of involvement of masses in a non-violent manner** and thus developed **Satyagraha** as principal instrument of obtaining concessions from British Rule.
- His relative success in South Africa against British Rule **made him popular within Congress** enabling his smooth rise in Indian politics upon his arrival from South Africa.
- He wrote about his political ideas and strategies in journal **from 1918 onwards** and these ideas evolved from his own experiences in dealing with British rule in South Africa.

GANDHIJI'S TECHNIQUE ON SATYAGRAHA

Following are the basic tenets of Satyagraha:

- A satyagrahi was **not to submit to what he considered as wrong**, but was to always remain truthful, non-violent and fearless.
- A satyagrahi works on the **principles of withdrawal of cooperation and boycott**. Methods of satyagraha include non-payment of taxes, and declining honours and positions of authority.
- A satyagrahi should be **ready to accept suffering in his struggle against the wrong-doer**. This suffering was to be a part of his love for truth.
- Even while carrying out his struggle against the wrong-doer, **a true satyagrahi would have no ill feeling for the wrong-doer**, which meant that hatred would be alien to his nature.
- A true satyagrahi would **never bow before the evil**, whatever the consequence.
- **Only the brave and strong could practise satyagraha**. Satyagraha was not for the weak and cowardly. Even violence was preferred to cowardice.

GANDHIJI'S EARLY STRUGGLE IN INDIA

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- Gandhi returned to India on **9th January 1915**. This day is celebrated as '**Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas**' in India.
- Upon reaching, he decided not to take any position on any political matter for at least one year.
- He understood the **limitations of moderate politics** and was also **not in favour of Home Rule agitation** which was becoming popular at that time.
- According to him, it was **not the best time to agitate for Home Rule** when Britain was in the middle of a war.
- He was convinced that the only technique capable of meeting the nationalist aims was a non-violent satyagraha.

GANDHIJI'S INITIAL ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

During 1917 and 1918, Gandhi was involved in **three struggles**—in **Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda**—before he launched the Rowlatt Satyagraha.

A. CHAMPARAN SATYAGRAHA (1917)

REASON FOR INTERVENTION

- Indigo farmers of Champaran district of Bihar were being exploited by European Planters.
- European planters had been forcing the peasants to **grow indigo on 3/20 part of the total land** (called tinkathia system).
- When German synthetic dyes replaced indigo, European planters demanded high rents and illegal dues from the peasants in order to maximise their profits.

GANDHIJI'S FIRST ACT OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN INDIA

- Upon request of **Rajkumar Shukla**, Gandhiji reached Champaran to look into the problems of indigo farmers.
- Soon he was joined by **Rajendra Prasad, Mazharul- Haq, Mahadeo Desai, Narhari Parekh, and J.B. Kripalani**.
- When authorities ordered him to leave the area, Gandhiji defied the order and preferred to face the punishment.
- This **passive resistance or civil disobedience** of an unjust order was a **novel method at that time**.

CONVINCING BRITISH FOR THE CAUSE OF INDIGO FARMERS

- Bending down to Gandhiji's gesture, the government **appointed a committee** to go into the matter and **nominated Gandhi as a member**.
- Gandhiji was **able to convince** the authorities that the **tinkathia system should be abolished** and that the **peasants should be compensated for the illegal dues extracted from them**.
- However, through a compromise, he **agreed that only 25 per cent of the money taken should be compensated**.
- Thus, first battle of civil disobedience in India was experimented and won.

B. AHMEDABAD MILL STRIKE (1918)

On **15th March 1918**, Gandhi intervened in a dispute between **cotton mill owners of Ahmedabad** and the **workers**.

REASON FOR INTERVENTION

- The dispute was over the **issue of discontinuation of the plague bonus**.
- Mill owners wanted to withdraw the bonus, while **workers were demanding a rise of 50 per cent in their wages**, so that they could manage the impact of wartime inflation.
- Amidst workers' agitations, **mill owners were ready to give only a 20 per cent wage hike** which was insufficient and therefore the **workers went on strike**.

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- As a retaliation, **mill owners began to dismiss the rebellious workers.**
- The disenchanted workers turned to **Anusuya Sarabhai** for a help in fighting for justice.

GANDHIJI'S FIRST HUNGER STRIKE IN INDIA

- Anusuya Behn went to Gandhiji, and asked him to intervene.
- Gandhiji **asked the workers to go on a strike and demand a 35 per cent increase in wages** instead of 50 per cent.
- Workers were **advised to remain non-violent** while on strike.

PRESSURE ON MILL OWNERS

- To strengthen the resolve of workers, Gandhiji himself **undertook a fast unto death** (his first) to strengthen the workers' resolve.
- Amidst the pressure caused by Gandhiji, the mill owners finally agreed to **submit the issue to a tribunal.**
- The **strike was withdrawn**, and in the end, the **tribunal awarded the workers a 35 per cent wage hike.**

C. KHEDA SATYAGRAHA (1918)

REASON FOR INTERVENTION

- Amidst **drought in 1918**, the crops failed in Kheda district of Gujarat. According to the **Revenue Code, if the yield was less than one-fourth the normal produce, the farmers were entitled to remission.**
- The Gujarat Sabha, consisting of the peasants, submitted petitions requesting the suspension of revenue assessment for the year 1919.
- Government, however, held that **property of the farmers would be seized if the taxes were not paid.**

GANDHIJI'S FIRST NON-COOPERATION IN INDIA

- On **22nd March 1918**, Gandhiji decided to launch a Satyagraha and asked the farmers not to pay the taxes.
- Gandhi, however, was **mainly the spiritual head of the struggle.**
- It was **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** and a group of other devoted Gandhians, namely, **Narahari Parikh, Mohanlal Pandya** and **Ravi Shankar Vyas**, who went around the villages, organised the villagers and told them what to do and gave the necessary political leadership.

TAX REVOLT AGAINST GOVERNMENT

- **Patel** along with his colleagues **organised the tax revolt** which the different ethnic and caste communities of Kheda supported.
- The revolt was remarkable in terms of discipline and unity.
- Ultimately, an agreement was reached between the government and farmers.
- Government agreed to **suspend the tax for the year in question**, and the rate of tax was reduced for the next year. It also returned all the confiscated property.
- The struggle at Kheda brought a **new awakening among the peasantry.**
- They became aware that they would not be free of injustice and exploitation unless and until their country achieved complete independence.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GANDHIJI'S EARLY STRUGGLE

- Gandhi **demonstrated to the people** the efficacy of his technique of **satyagraha.**
- He found his **feet among the masses** and came to have a surer **understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the masses.**

He **acquired respect** and commitment of many, especially the youth

IDEOLOGY OF MAHATMA GANDHI:

Before we discuss Gandhi's ideology it is necessary to mention that there were a number of influences which worked on Gandhi and helped him in evolving his philosophy. His autobiography makes it clear that the outlook of his parents and the socio-religious milieu of his native place left a profound influence on him. In particular, the values of Vaishnavism and the tradition of Jainism shaped his early thoughts. Moreover, some Hindu texts like the Bhagavata Gita also influenced him. The Gospels (especially the Sermon on the Mount) and the writings of **Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin** also greatly influenced his thinking. Gandhi was primarily a man of action and his own experiences in life helped him more than his readings in evolving and shaping his ideology.

Satyagraha

- The chief aspect of Gandhi's ideology was Satyagraha i.e. 'force of truth'. As mentioned earlier, it was evolved by Gandhi in South Africa but after it had been fully developed it became a dominant element in India's struggle for freedom from 1919 onwards. For Gandhi, the Satyagraha was to be used so that by self-suffering and not by violence the enemy could be converted to one's own view.
- P. Sitaramayya aptly explains Satyagraha as follows: It involves self-chosen suffering and humiliation for the resisters. If 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.
- Gandhi made a distinction between the Satyagraha and passive resistance, when he wrote: The latter (passive resistance) has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end; whereas the former (Satyagraha) has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest, and excludes the use of violence in any shape.

Non-violence

- 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 wish him well; he will not swear at him; he will not cause him any physical hurt. He will put up with all the injury to which is subjected by the wrong doer. Thus, nonviolence is complete innocence. Complete Non-Violence is complete absence of ill will against all that lives.
- Gandhi emphasised that non-violent Satyagraha could be practised by common people for achieving political ends. But some time Gandhi took a position which fell short of complete non-violence. His repeated insistence that even violence as preferable to a cowardly surrender to injustice sometimes created a delicate problem of interpretation.
- In 1918 Gandhi campaigned for military recruitment in the hope of winning concessions from the British government after the war which can not be easily reconciled with the doctrine of non-violence.
- In practice, Satyagraha could assume various forms-fasting, non-violent picketing, different types of non-cooperation and ultimately in politics, civil disobedience in willing anticipation of the legal penalty. Gandhi firmly believed that all these forms of Satyagraha were pure means to achieve pure ends. Gandhi's critics sometime take the view that through the technique of Satyagraha, Gandhi succeeded in controlling the mass movements from above. The dominant section in the peasantry

and the business groups also found the Gandhian non-violent model convenient because they feared to lose if political struggle turned into uninhibited and violent social revolution. On the whole, the use of Satyagraha by Gandhi and the Congress in national movement brought different sections and classes of society together against the British rule.

Trusteeship

- Trusteeship is a socio-economic philosophy that was propounded by Mahatma Gandhi. He believed that the rich people could be persuaded to part with their wealth to help the poor. Putting it in Gandhiji's words "Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth – either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry – I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others." This concept was condemned by socialists as being in favour of the landlords, feudal princes and the capitalists.

Religion

- Another important aspect of Gandhi's ideology was his attitude towards religion. Religion for Gandhi was not a doctrinal formulation of any religious system but a basic truth underlying all formal religions. Gandhi described religion as the struggle for Truth. His conviction was that religion could not be relegated to the realm of private opinion but must influence and permeate all activities of men. He was convinced that religion provided the fundamental basis for political action in India. This makes easy for us to explain that Gandhi took the Khilafat issue of the Muslims with a view to bringing them in the movement against the British government.
- Gandhi also used the religious idiom through concepts like 'Ram Raj' to mobilize people in the national movement. However, it cannot be denied that this use of religious idiom prevented Gandhi and the national movement under his leadership from giving effective challenge to a major category of division among the Indian people which can cause a fissure in our national unity in periods of crisis and strain, and tended to push into the background their internal differences and conflicts.

Hind swaraj

- The other important feature of Gandhian thought was the body of ideas which he illustrated in his book 'Hind Swaraj' (1909). In this work, Gandhi pointed out that the real enemy was not the British political domination but the modern western civilization which was luring India into its stranglehold.
- He believed that the Indians educated in western style, particularly lawyers, doctors, teachers and industrialists, were undermining India's ancient heritage by insidiously spreading modern ways.
- He criticised railways as they had spread plague and produced famines by encouraging the export of food grains. Here he saw Swaraj or self rule as a state of life which could only exist where Indians followed their traditional civilization uncorrupted by modern civilization.
- According to Mahatma Gandhi, Indian's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the past 50 years or so. The Railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and such like have to go and the so-called upper classes have to learn to live consciously and religiously and deliberately the simple life of peasant.
- These ideas certainly look utopian and obscurantist in the context of the early twentieth century. But it seems that his ideas reflected adverse effects of 'modernization' under the colonial rule on the artisans and poor peasantry in the countryside.
- Later on, Gandhi tried to give concrete shape to his social and economic ideas by taking up the programme of Khadi, village reconstruction and Harijan welfare (which included the removal of untouchability). It is true that these efforts of Gandhi could not completely solve the problem of the

rural people, but it cannot be denied that this programme of Gandhi succeeded in improving their conditions to a certain extent and making the whole country conscious of the new need for its social and economic reconstruction.

Swadeshi

- Gandhi advocated swadeshi which meant the use of things belonging to one's own country, particularly stressing the replacement of foreign machine made goods with Indian hand made cloth. This was his solution to the poverty of peasants who could spin at home to supplement their income and his cure for the drain of money of England in payment for imported cloth. It is interesting to find that despite his pronounced opposition to the influences of Western Industrial civilization Gandhi did not take a hostile view towards emerging modern industries in India. As noticed earlier, Gandhi had close relations with industrialists like Ambalal Sarabhai. Another noted industrialist G.D. Birla was his close associate after 1922. Gandhi believed in the interdependence of capital and labour and advocated the concept of capitalists being 'trustees' for the workers. In fact, Gandhi never encouraged politicization of the workers on class lines and openly abhorred militant economic struggles. As a matter of fact, all the major elements of Gandhi's ideology are based on a distrust of conflict in the notion of class interests. Gandhi always emphasised the broad unity that can and must be achieved on the basis of a larger objective among people divided on account of class or any other category.

Constructive Works Programmes of Gandhi

Constructive works programme of Gandhi was essentially a comprehensive socio Economic programme. These programmes were part of Gandhian Nationalistic political struggle as well. His programme represents issue like social service, social reforms and Economic reconstructions.

Component of constructive work programme

- Hindu Muslim unity.
- Harijan upliftment
- Emancipation of women
- National Education
- Promotion of Khadi
- Promotion of Village Industry

The constructive work programme made Gandhian leadership more comprehensive. His political struggle was no longer associated with political issues only and was closely associated with the socio-economic issues facing country. These played vital role in popularizing Gandhian ideas and philosophy and earned him the support of the masses in the National Movement.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. Which of the following Journals were not established by Gandhiji?

- (a) Indian Opinion
- (b) New India
- (c) Both a and b
- (d) None of the above

Answer: B

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Q2. In context of Gandhiji's initial political struggle in India, arrange the following events in correct chronological sequence:

1. Ahmadabad Mill Strike
2. Kheda Satyagraha
3. Champaran Satyagraha

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: C

Q3. Which of the following pairs are not correctly matched?

Satyagraha	Reason for Satyagraha
1. Champaran – 1917	Failure of British authorities to compensate the farmers for the drought.
2. Ahmadabad – 1918	Discontinuation of plague bonus by mill owners and reluctance to hike the wages.
3. Kheda – 1918	Forcing peasants to grow Indigo on 3/20 part of total land.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: A

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Champaran Satyagraha was the first act of Civil Disobedience by Gandhiji.
2. Champaran Satyagraha was undertaken by Gandhiji against 'Tinkathia' system that exploited the Indigo Farmers.

Which of the statements given above is/are true?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: B

Q5. At which one of the following places did Mahatma Gandhi first start his satyagraha in India?

- (a) Ahmedabad
- (b) Bardoli
- (c) Champaran
- (d) Kheda

Answer: C

Q6. Where did Gandhiji launch his first successful Satyagraha after returning from South Africa? [2000]

- (a) Chauri Chaura
- (b) Dandi

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- (c) Champaran
- (d) Bardoli

Answer: C

Q7. What was the first venture by Gandhiji in all India politics? [1999]

- (a) Non-Cooperation
- (b) Rowaltt Satyagraha
- (c) Champaran Movement
- (d) Dandi March

Answer: C

SUBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

Question 1: Throw light on the significance of the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi in the present times.

Question 2: Analyse the sources and various aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's political thinking.