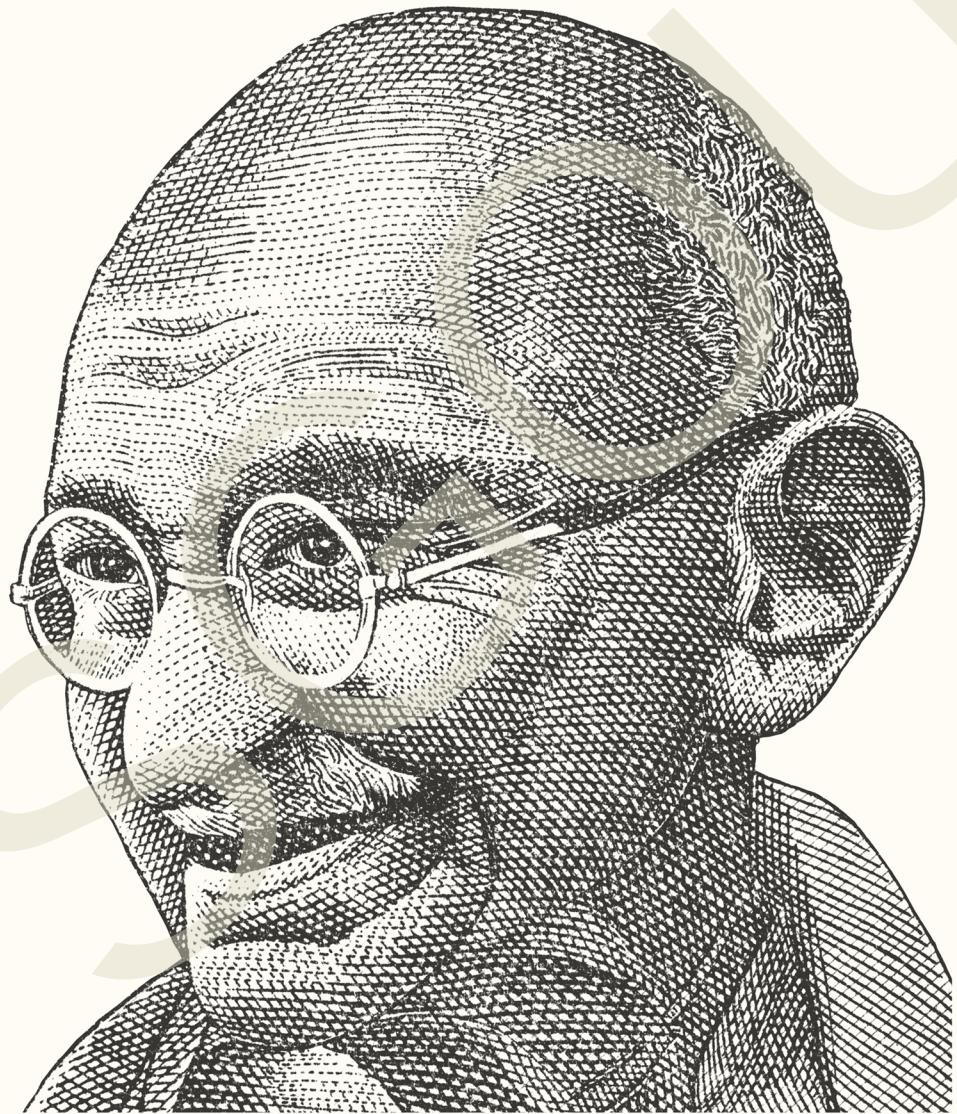


# MAHATMA GANDHI

**COURSE CODE: SGB24HS 101 VC**

Value Added Course  
For FYUG Programmes  
Self Learning Material



## **SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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**Mahatma Gandhi**  
Course Code: SGB24HS101VC  
Semester - III

**Value Added Course  
For Four Year Undergraduate Programmes  
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(With Model Question Paper Sets)**



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## MAHATMA GANDHI

Course Code: SGB24HS101VC

Semester- III

Value Added Course

For FYUG Programmes

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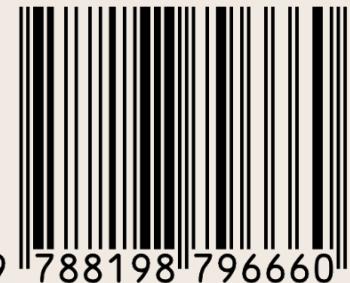


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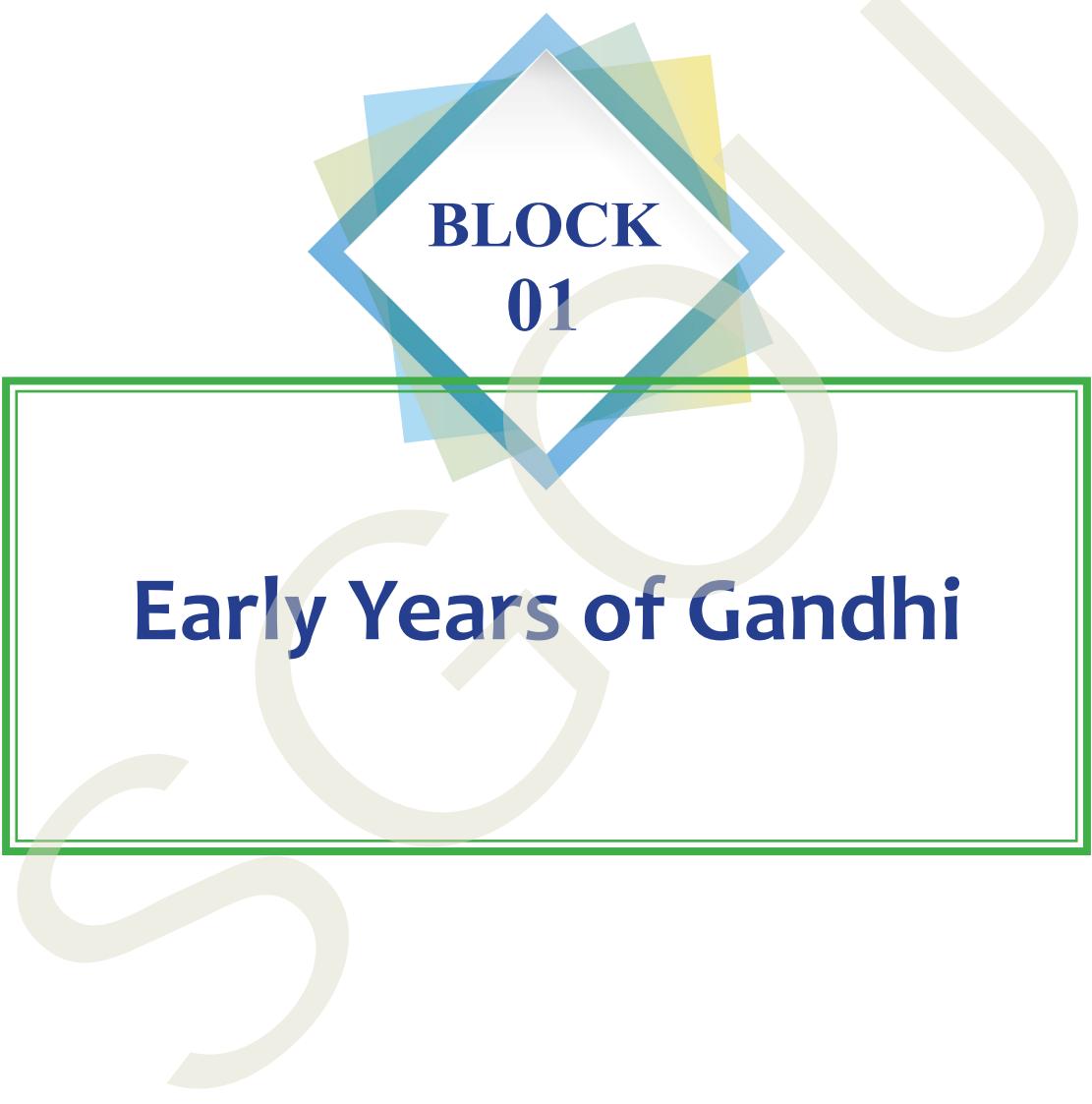
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**BLOCK  
01**



# **Early Years of Gandhi**



# Unit 1

## Biographical Sketch of Gandhi

### L

### Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ able to comprehend the cultural and familial influences on Gandhi's early life, shaping his values and principles
- ◆ familiarised with Gandhi's educational decisions, the challenges he faced in England, and his cultural adaptation
- ◆ able to comprehend how Gandhi's experiences in South Africa laid the groundwork for his development of the philosophy of Satyagraha

### B

### Background

"Bapu" is a term of endearment and reverence commonly used to refer to Mahatma Gandhi in India. It translates to "father" in Gujarati, a language spoken in the western state of Gujarat where Gandhi was born. The title "Bapu" was bestowed upon Gandhi by the Indian people as a sign of respect, admiration, and affection for his role in India's struggle for independence.

Mahatma Gandhi, often referred to simply as Gandhi, was a prominent leader in India's independence movement against British colonial rule. He advocated for non-violent resistance and civil disobedience as powerful tools for achieving political and social change. His philosophy of non-violence, known as Satyagraha, inspired millions of people around the world and continues to influence movements for peace and justice.

Gandhi's life was characterised by his dedication to truth, simplicity, and the welfare of others. He lived a humble lifestyle, wearing simple clothes and practising austerity. He emphasised the importance of self-discipline and self-reliance, encouraging Indians to free themselves from the shackles of British imperialism through non-cooperation and non-violent protest.



## Keywords

Diwan, Porbandar, Inner Temple, Barrister, Rowlatt Acts, *Satyagraha*



## Discussion

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, born on October 2nd, 1869, was the youngest child of his father's fourth wife. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, served as the dewan (chief minister) of Porbandar, the capital of a small principality in western India, now part of Gujarat state, under British suzerainty. Despite lacking a formal education, Karamchand Gandhi proved to be a capable administrator, adept at navigating the dynamics between the unpredictable princes, their resilient subjects, and assertive British political officers in authority.

### 1.1.1 Childhood



Fig. 1.1.1 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's home in Porbandar

Gandhi's mother, Putlibai, was deeply devoted to religion and cared little for materialistic pleasures. She spent her time between home and the mandir, frequently fasting, and tirelessly nursed family members during sickness. Mohandas grew up in a home strongly influenced by Vaishnavism, and with a touch of Jainism, promoting non-violence and the belief in the eternal nature of everything. Consequently, he embraced values like vegetarianism, fasting for self-purification, and tolerance among people of different beliefs.

The cultural ambiance of colonial Porbandar, with its festivals, rituals, and diverse community, played a pivotal role in Gandhi's early exposure to the pluralistic nature of Indian society. The town's narrow alleys echoed with the sounds of various languages and dialects, exposing young Mohandas to the kaleidoscope of India's cultural diversity. The fabric of Porbandar's society, with its myriad customs and traditions, became the canvas upon which Gandhi's character would be painted. The educational facilities in Porbandar were basic; at the primary school attended by Mohandas, the children traced the alphabet in the sand using their fingers. Fortunately, his father took up the position of dewan in Rajkot, another princely state.





Fig.1.1.2 A young Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Although Mohandas occasionally earned prizes and scholarships at local schools, his overall academic performance was mediocre. A reserved child, he didn't excel in either the classroom or in sports. During his free time, he enjoyed long solitary walks, attended to his ailing father, and assisted his mother with household chores.

### 1.1.2 Early Marriage

Gandhi entered into an arranged marriage at the age of 13. His union with Kasturba was typical for the time, guided by family traditions and societal norms. The marriage was a significant part of his life and influenced his personal development and commitment to principles. During this period, family dynamics played a crucial role. Gandhi's marriage marked a traditional alliance, aligning with cultural expectations. Kasturba, his wife, supported him in his pursuits, including his involvement in social and political matters. The marital relationship provided stability, and Kasturba became an integral part of Gandhi's journey, standing by him in various challenges. In 1885, his father Karamchand faced a severe bout of fistula, and his wife Putlibai, along with their children, especially Mohandas,

cared for him diligently. Despite various attempted treatments, including a suggested surgery that the family doctor declined, Karamchand's condition worsened day by day. Unfortunately, all efforts proved futile, and on November 16th, at the age of 63, he passed away.

Gandhi's early marriage to Kasturba marked a crucial juncture in his life, thrusting him into the responsibilities of adulthood at a tender age. Arranged marriages were common in India during that era, and Gandhi, at just 13 years old, found himself navigating the complexities of marital commitment and familial obligations. This union with Kasturba not only signalled the beginning of his journey into married life but also introduced him to the challenges and duties inherent in maintaining a household and supporting a family. The weight of these responsibilities likely prompted Gandhi to confront his own maturity and contemplate the direction his life was taking.

Compounding the pressures of his marital commitment was the loss of his father during Gandhi's early adulthood. Losing a parent is a profoundly transformative experience for anyone, and for Gandhi, it meant the absence of a guiding figure in his life. His father's passing left Gandhi without the paternal guidance and support that he may have relied upon during moments of uncertainty. This loss left a void that Gandhi had to grapple with as he navigated the complexities of his personal and professional life. The dual impact of his early marriage and the loss of his father prompted Gandhi to engage in a period of deep reflection and introspection. Confronted with the realities of marital commitment, familial obligations, and the absence of parental guidance, Gandhi found himself reassessing his life's trajectory and his place within society. This period of soul-searching played a pivotal role in shaping Gandhi's evolving sense of duty, convictions, and moral principles.

During this time of introspection, Gandhi began to question societal norms and traditional expectations. He realised the importance of living a life aligned with one's principles and values, rather than simply conforming to societal expectations. Gandhi's contemplation of his own life choices ultimately led him to embrace a philosophy of non-violence, truth, and service to others. These principles would become central to his later activism and leadership in the Indian independence movement.

### 1.1.3 Education

His family deliberated on Mohandas's future, recognising his desire to become a doctor. However, due to Vaishnava objections to vivisection and the family tradition of holding high office in a Gujarat state, qualifying as a barrister seemed necessary. This path required a visit to England, which Mohandas, unhappy at Samaldas College, eagerly embraced. He envisioned England as "a land of philosophers and poets, the very centre of civilization." Overcoming financial constraints, as his father had left them with little money and his mother's concerns, Mohandas secured the necessary funds from his brothers. Assuaging her worries, he vowed to abstain from wine, women, and meat while abroad. Despite objections from leaders of the Modh Bania subcaste, he sailed to England in September 1888, joining the Inner Temple, one of London's law colleges, ten days after arrival.

During his time in England, Gandhi immersed himself in preparations for the University of London matriculation examination, focusing diligently on English and Latin. However, his academic pursuits were often overshadowed by his primary concerns, which revolved around personal and moral growth.

The transition from the semi-rural atmosphere of Rajkot to the bustling

cosmopolitan life of London presented significant challenges for Gandhi. He found himself grappling with the unfamiliar aspects of Western culture, including its food, dress, and social customs. Adapting to these new norms proved to be a painful struggle, and he often felt awkward and out of place.

One particular aspect of the Western lifestyle that posed a challenge for Gandhi was his commitment to vegetarianism. In a society where meat consumption was the norm, Gandhi's dietary choices set him apart and sometimes caused him embarrassment. Concerns were raised by his friends, who warned him that his vegetarianism could hinder both his academic studies and his health.

However, Gandhi's conviction in vegetarianism only deepened over time. His outlook shifted from viewing it as a source of embarrassment to a firmly held belief after he discovered a vegetarian restaurant and a book that passionately defended the lifestyle. This newfound conviction propelled him to join the executive committee of the London Vegetarian Society, where he found a sense of purpose and belonging.

Gandhi's involvement with the Vegetarian Society not only bolstered his confidence but also ignited a sense of missionary zeal within him. He became increasingly passionate about promoting the benefits of vegetarianism, not just for personal health but also for ethical and environmental reasons.

Gandhi encountered various thinkers in England, including socialists, humanitarians, and Theosophists, who shaped his views on morality, simplicity, and cooperation. Upon returning to India in July 1891, Gandhi discovered that his mother had passed away during his absence, and he realised that having a barrister's degree didn't ensure a prosperous career. The legal field was overcrowded, and reserved, and Gandhi struggled to succeed. His initial courtroom



appearance in Bombay left him disheartened. Rejected for a part-time teaching position, he returned to Rajkot. Attempting to make a modest living by drafting petitions for litigants, even this option closed when he displeased a British officer. In 1893, aged 24, with limited alternatives, Gandhi accepted a one-year contract from an Indian firm in Natal, South Africa. Little did he anticipate the transformative impact of this decision on his life and the course of history.

#### 1.1.4 Gandhi in South Africa

In South Africa, Gandhi's experiences with racial discrimination and his legal work intersected in a manner that profoundly affected him. Gandhi's client in South Africa was Dada Abdulla, a wealthy Muslim merchant in Pretoria who was embroiled in a financial dispute with another merchant named Sheikh Mehtab. Gandhi's involvement in this case coincided with his firsthand encounters with the flagrant racism endured by the Indian community.

During his travels, he faced a series of degrading incidents, including being expelled from a first-class railway compartment, subjected to physical assault by a stagecoach driver, and denied accommodation in hotels reserved for Europeans. These indignities, routine for Indian traders, deeply affected Gandhi, igniting a transformation within him. Despite the adversity, his commitment to justice remained unwavering. When confronted by a European magistrate in a Durban court who demanded he remove his *pagdi* (turban), during his time in Pretoria, Gandhi immersed himself in studying the conditions of South Asian communities, seeking to understand their plight and empower them to assert their rights. He became an advocate for education, teaching fellow Indians about their legal rights and encouraging them to stand up against discrimination.



Fig. 1.1.3 Gandhi as a lawyer in South Africa (1905)

Initially, Gandhi had plans to return to India in 1894. However, his decision to stay in South Africa was prompted by the introduction of a bill that threatened to revoke Indian voting rights. Gandhi recognised the significance of this threat and realised that leaving would mean abandoning the fight against injustice. Determined to make a difference, Gandhi chose to remain in South Africa and dedicate himself to the struggle for social justice, marking a pivotal moment in his commitment to fighting oppression and inequality.

Instead of accepting them, he decided to defend his dignity and challenge injustice in South Africa. While in Pretoria, he studied the conditions of South Asian communities, educating them on their rights. Initially planning to return to India in 1894, he changed his mind when he learned about a bill threatening Indian voting rights. Gandhi decided to stay and fight against this injustice, marking a pivotal moment in his commitment to social justice.

#### 1.1.5 Return to India

Gandhi stayed in South Africa, persisting in his activism and navigating the struggle against colonial bureaucracy. After 21 years

in South Africa, he decided to leave in the summer of 1914, just before the outbreak of World War I. He, along with his family, initially travelled to London, where they stayed for several months. Eventually, they departed England in December, arriving in Bombay in early January 1915.



Fig.1.1.4 Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba, on their return to India (1915)

For the next three years, Gandhi appeared uncertain about Indian politics, staying on the outskirts without joining any political movements. He supported the British war effort, even campaigning for the recruitment of soldiers for the British Indian Army. His support extended to actively campaigning for the recruitment of soldiers for the British Indian Army, showcasing a willingness to collaborate. However, this collaboration did not equate to unquestioning allegiance,

as Gandhi continued to critique British officials for any perceived unjust actions, criticising British officials for any unjust acts and addressing the grievances of suffering peasants in Bihar (Champaran) and Gujarat (Kheda), mobilising them to protest against the administration.

The turning point came in February 1919 with the imposition of the controversial Rowlatt Acts by the British colonial government. These laws, which allowed for imprisonment without trial, were met with widespread outrage and resistance from Indian nationalists. Feeling completely estranged from British rule in the wake of this oppressive legislation, Gandhi announced a *satyagraha* (non-violent resistance) struggle in opposition to the Rowlatt Acts. This marked a significant shift in Gandhi's approach, as he transitioned from a position of collaboration to one of active opposition against colonial oppression.

In announcing his opposition to the Rowlatt Acts, Gandhi set the stage for the transformation of the Indian national movement. His decision to mobilise the Indian masses in non-violent resistance against unjust laws would become a defining feature of his leadership and a catalyst for the broader struggle for Indian independence. Thus, despite his earlier ambivalence and collaboration with colonial authorities, Gandhi's steadfast commitment to justice and non-violent resistance ultimately paved the way for India's liberation from British rule.



## Recap

- ◆ Mohandas Gandhi was born in Porbandar in 1869
- ◆ Raised with Vaishnavite and Jain values



- ◆ Modest education and a reserved child
- ◆ Married Kasturba at age 13
- ◆ Father's death prompted reflection, reassessment
- ◆ Studied law in England despite facing cultural challenges
- ◆ Confronted racism in South Africa with activism
- ◆ Returned to India in 1915
- ◆ Initially supported the British war effort in WWI
- ◆ Opposed the Rowlatt Acts
- ◆ Announced Satyagraha in 1919



## Objective Questions

1. What was the profession of Karamchand Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's father?
2. In which Indian state was Porbandar located, where Mahatma Gandhi was born?
3. How old was Mahatma Gandhi when he got married to Kasturba?
4. In which year did Gandhi enroll as a law student in London?
5. What was the primary reason for Gandhi's decision to study law in England?
6. Which law association did Gandhi join in London?
7. Which society did Gandhi join in London, where he became passionate about promoting vegetarianism?
8. What prompted Gandhi to stay in South Africa instead of returning to India in 1894?
9. When did Gandhi return to India from South Africa?
10. What event marked Gandhi's transition from collaboration to active opposition against British rule in India?
11. What term did Gandhi use to describe his method of non-violent resistance?
12. In which regions did Gandhi mobilise peasants to protest against the administration's policies?

# A

## Answers

1. Diwan of Rajkot
2. Gujarat
3. 13
4. 1888
5. Family tradition
6. The Inner Temple
7. London Vegetarian Society
8. Introduction of a bill threatening Indian voting rights
9. 1915
10. The Rowlatt Acts
11. *Satyagraha*
12. Kheda and Champaran

# A

## Assignments

1. Analyse how familial responsibilities and marital dynamics shaped Gandhi's journey into adulthood and his later activism.
2. Evaluate Gandhi's decision to pursue legal studies in England and his experiences adapting to Western culture. How did Gandhi's time in England shape his worldview and his engagement with Western philosophy?

# R

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# S

## Suggested Reading

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2. Gandhi, M.K. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Beacon Press, 1993.
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## Unit 2

# Influences on Gandhi

## L

### Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ familiarised with how ancient Indian traditions shaped Gandhi's early values, including non-violence and tolerance
- ◆ aware of how Gandhi's exposure to Western philosophies during his time in England influenced his perspectives
- ◆ able to recognise the pivotal role of Gandhi's experiences in South Africa, particularly racial discrimination, in shaping his commitment to justice

## B

### Background

Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most influential figures in modern history, was not only a political leader but also a deeply philosophical thinker whose ideas continue to inspire people around the world. Central to Gandhi's philosophy were the principles of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa*, which he developed and refined throughout his life. These concepts formed the cornerstone of his approach to social and political activism, guiding his strategies in the struggle against colonialism, oppression, and injustice.

Gandhi's philosophy was profoundly influenced by a diverse range of sources, including religious teachings, philosophical texts, personal experiences, and interactions with various cultures. In this units we will be examining the key influences on Gandhi's Philosophy.



# K

# Keywords

Blend of cultures, *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*, Liberal thought, *Sarvodaya*, *Anekantavada*, *Bhakti Tradition*, *Khadi*, Civil Disobedience, Racial Segregation.

# D

# Discussion

## 1.2.1 Porbandar and Early Influences

Porbandar, situated in Gujarat, existed as part of the princely state of Porbandar under British suzerainty. The town blended traditional Indian culture with the influence of British colonial rule. In the 1800s, Porbandar was a relatively small and tranquil town featuring narrow lanes, traditional housing, and a lively market. Its economy revolved around agriculture, supplemented by fishing and trade due to its coastal location. The community boasted a diverse population engaged in various occupations, contributing to the town's cultural diversity.

Karamchand Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's father served as the Diwan (chief minister) in the princely state of Porbandar during the late 19th century. This position bestowed upon him a significant role in the administration of the state. As the Diwan, Karamchand Gandhi was responsible for advising the ruler, managing the state's affairs, and overseeing the welfare of its subjects.

Gandhi's understanding of unity in diversity was deeply rooted in his early experiences in Porbandar, his birthplace in western India. Porbandar's social fabric and community life provided a rich tapestry of religious and cultural diversity that profoundly influenced Gandhi's later

philosophy, emphasising religious tolerance and harmony.

During his formative years, Gandhi was exposed to the religious diversity of Porbandar, where Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, and other faiths coexisted peacefully. This exposure played a pivotal role in shaping Gandhi's belief in the importance of religious tolerance and respect for diverse beliefs and practices.

Porbandar's vibrant community life also contributed to Gandhi's understanding of unity in diversity. He participated in local festivals, community gatherings, and religious events, where people from different backgrounds came together to celebrate shared traditions and values. These experiences fostered a sense of belonging and solidarity among diverse communities and reinforced Gandhi's belief in the strength of communal harmony.

Moreover, the socio-economic conditions in Porbandar exposed Gandhi to the harsh realities of poverty, inequality, and the oppressive caste system. He witnessed firsthand the struggles faced by the common people, which fuelled his commitment to social justice and equality. Gandhi's observations of injustice and hardship in his hometown left a profound impact on him, shaping his vision for a more equitable and inclusive society.

### 1.2.1.1 Family

Mohandas Gandhi's early years were profoundly shaped by the influence of his mother, Putlibai, who remained his guiding light and inspiration throughout his life. Born in 1839 into a well-to-do Pranami Vaishnava Hindu family, her nurturing nature extended to selflessly caring for family members during times of illness or need. Despite her privileged background, Putlibai lived a life centred around ascetic practices, including frequent fasting and strict adherence to religious vows, driven by her unwavering faith. She divided her time between the temple and home, where she lovingly attended to her children's needs with utmost devotion.

Putlibai played a significant role in shaping his moral conscience and influencing his actions in the incidents described above. Her devout adherence to religious principles and her deep sense of morality instilled in Gandhi a strong foundation of ethical values from a young age.

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi recounts episodes from his childhood that shaped his moral character. Putlibai faithfully observed a daily vow known as the 'Kokila Vratha'. Following the completion of this ritual, she patiently awaited the call of the Indian cuckoo before breaking her fast. However, on one occasion, despite her prolonged wait near the window, the sound of the cuckoo remained absent. Young Gandhi, noticing his mother's distress, devised a plan. He ventured outside, mimicked the cuckoo's call, and swiftly returned indoors to inform his mother that the bird had sung.

Unbeknownst to Gandhi, his mother had diligently followed this ritual for many years. Upon discovering her son's mischievous prank, Putlibai was overcome with sorrow and disappointment. In her anguish, she expressed her despair, questioning why such a deceitful child had been born to her.

Witnessing his mother's emotional turmoil deeply affected Gandhi, prompting him to make a solemn vow: "From this day on, I will not utter falsehood. I will not do anything that would hurt my mother's gentle heart."

Gandhi also recalled incidents from his childhood where he succumbed to peer pressure and engaged in behaviours that went against his mother's wishes. One such episode occurred when Gandhi was around twelve or thirteen years old. In a moment of temptation, Gandhi stole coins from a servant's pocket. This act of theft, though driven by desire, ultimately contradicted the moral principles instilled in him by his mother.

Similarly, at the age of fifteen, Gandhi found himself in another morally compromising situation. Faced with the burden of his brother's debt, Gandhi resorted to stealing a piece of gold from his brother's armlet to clear the dues. Despite his intentions to alleviate his brother's financial troubles, Gandhi's actions betrayed his mother's teachings of honesty and integrity. Overwhelmed by guilt, Gandhi resolved never to steal again and decided to confess his transgressions to his father. He wrote a confession letter expressing remorse and asking for forgiveness, which he presented to his father while he was confined to bed. Gandhi's father, deeply moved by his son's sincerity, forgave him unconditionally.

Despite these challenges, Putlibai's abundant love, ascetic resolve, and unwavering commitment to truth profoundly influenced Gandhi, shaping his character and guiding his spiritual journey. Her religious devotion, characterised by strict vows and fasting, left a lasting impression on him, inspiring him to embrace a life of self-sacrifice and service to others.

The influence of Putlibai on Gandhi continued into his adulthood. Even when faced with significant decisions, such as his choice to pursue further studies in England,



Gandhi sought his mother's guidance and approval. Despite initial hesitation on her part, Gandhi persistently sought her blessing, highlighting the profound importance he placed on her opinion. Ultimately, Putlibai's eventual approval played a crucial role in Gandhi's decision to embark on his educational journey abroad.

Before Gandhi left for England to study law, Putlibai extracted three vows from him as a testament to his commitment and love: abstaining from meat, alcohol, and tobacco. Gandhi honoured these vows diligently, viewing them as a symbol of their deep bond and mutual respect. The news of Putlibai passing deeply affected Gandhi upon his return to India, yet her legacy continued to shape his unwavering commitment to non-violence and his spiritual quest for truth and righteousness. Putlibai's saintly presence remained etched in Gandhi's memory, serving as a constant source of inspiration and guidance throughout his life.

## 1.2.2 Journey Through Indian Philosophy

Gandhi's engagement with Indian philosophy from an early age profoundly shaped his ethical and moral convictions, providing him with a philosophical framework that guided his life's work. Influenced by texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the works of philosophers like Adi Sankaracharya, Gandhi was introduced to profound ideas related to *dharma*, *karma*, and self-realisation. These foundational texts instilled in him a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of living in harmony with moral and spiritual principles.

Central to Gandhi's philosophy was the concept of 'ahimsa' or non-violence, which he drew from the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Gandhi saw *ahimsa* not merely as a passive principle but as a dynamic force capable of bringing about profound social and

political change. He believed that practising non-violence required immense courage and self-discipline, as it necessitated the willingness to endure suffering rather than inflict harm upon others. *Ahimsa* became the cornerstone of Gandhi's philosophy, guiding his strategies during the Indian independence movement and inspiring countless others to adopt non-violent resistance as a means of social and political transformation.

Closely linked with *ahimsa* was the concept of 'satya' or truth, which Gandhi considered another pillar of his philosophy. For Gandhi, the pursuit of truth was not only a moral duty but also a path to self-realisation and spiritual enlightenment. He famously coined the term 'satyagraha' to describe his philosophy of non-violent resistance, emphasising the power of truth as a force for social and political change. Through *satyagraha*, Gandhi sought to confront injustice and oppression with unwavering truthfulness, appealing to the conscience of oppressors and mobilising the masses in pursuit of justice.

Gandhi's assimilation of ancient Indian wisdom also extended to the Upanishadic concept of 'atman,' or the inner self or soul. He believed in the inherent divinity of every individual, fostering a sense of equality and respect for all beings. This perspective profoundly influenced Gandhi's commitment to eradicating social evils such as untouchability and caste discrimination, as he saw these practices as antithetical to the fundamental unity of all life. Gandhi's advocacy for social justice and equality was grounded in his belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every human being, regardless of caste, creed, or background.

Gandhi's philosophy of 'Sarvodaya' reflects his deeply held belief in the welfare and upliftment of all members of society, particularly the most vulnerable. Influenced by teachings from the *Upanishads* and Jain philosophy, Gandhi envisioned a



decentralised economy where the success of society was measured by the well-being of its weakest members. This principle guided his advocacy for rural development, promotion of *khadi* (handspun cloth), and emphasis on self-sufficiency and community empowerment. By prioritising the welfare of the marginalised and disadvantaged, Gandhi sought to create a society based on justice, equality, and compassion.

Additionally, Gandhi embraced the Jain principle of 'anekantavada' or non-absolutism, which acknowledges the multifaceted nature of truth and encourages tolerance towards diverse perspectives. This concept played a crucial role in Gandhi's approach to resolving conflicts and seeking truth. Instead of adhering rigidly to one viewpoint, Gandhi adopted a pragmatic approach that valued dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation. By recognising the complexity of human experiences and perspectives, Gandhi promoted a culture of empathy and mutual respect, essential for fostering harmony and social cohesion.

Furthermore, Gandhi's understanding of spirituality was deeply influenced by the Bhakti movement, which emphasised devotion and love for the divine. Grounded in the Bhakti tradition, Gandhi believed in the universality of religions and advocated for religious tolerance and inclusivity. He saw spirituality as a unifying force that transcended sectarian boundaries and fostered a sense of interconnection and compassion among individuals. By promoting religious harmony and tolerance, Gandhi sought to create a society where people of different faiths could coexist peacefully and work together for the common good.

### 1.2.2.1 Synthesis of Western and Indian Thought

Gandhi's decision to pursue legal studies in London marked a pivotal moment in

his intellectual and spiritual journey. It represented a significant departure from his upbringing steeped in traditional Indian values and philosophical texts, opening the door to a diverse and dynamic intellectual landscape that would profoundly shape his worldview.

In London, Gandhi was exposed to a rich tapestry of Western philosophical and political thought that challenged and expanded his perspectives. Immersed in a cosmopolitan environment, he encountered a myriad of ideas and ideologies that stimulated his intellectual curiosity and fuelled his quest for truth and enlightenment.

One of the most influential figures during Gandhi's time in London was John Ruskin, whose work "Unto This Last" had a profound impact on Gandhi's life and thought.

Ruskin's ideas centred around simplicity, non-materialism, and the pursuit of higher moral values resonated deeply with Gandhi, igniting within him a fervent desire to embody these principles in his own life. Inspired by Ruskin's philosophy, Gandhi began experimenting with simple living and renunciation of material possessions, laying the groundwork for his later advocacy of voluntary simplicity and economic self-sufficiency.

Additionally, Gandhi's encounter with the writings of Leo Tolstoy further enriched his understanding of ethical and spiritual principles. Tolstoy's emphasis on non-violence, compassion, and the pursuit of truth deeply resonated with Gandhi, reinforcing his commitment to these ideals and inspiring his lifelong pursuit of non-violent resistance as a means of social and political transformation.

Gandhi's engagement with Western thought during his time in London was not merely academic but profoundly transformative. It challenged his preconceived notions, expanded his intellectual horizons, and laid



the foundation for his evolving philosophy of life. Through his encounters with thinkers like Ruskin and Tolstoy, Gandhi was inspired to embark on a path of personal and social transformation, grounded in the pursuit of truth, simplicity, and higher moral values. These formative experiences in London would shape Gandhi's approach to activism, leadership, and spirituality, guiding his efforts to create a more just, compassionate, and equitable world.

Gandhi's exposure to liberal thought during his formative years, particularly through his engagement with Western thinkers like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, played a significant role in shaping his evolving worldview. Central to liberal ideology are principles such as individual rights, equality, and the rule of law, which resonated deeply with Gandhi's own values and aspirations for a just society. Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience," in particular, left a profound impression on Gandhi and became a guiding principle in his philosophy of non-violent resistance. Thoreau's advocacy for individual conscience and civil disobedience as a means to challenge unjust laws deeply influenced Gandhi's approach to social and political activism.

Furthermore, Gandhi's exposure to Western education broadened his understanding of political structures and governance, particularly through his encounters with parliamentary democracy and the British legal system. This exposure informed his later advocacy for democratic principles within the context of India's struggle for independence. Gandhi's commitment to the concept of 'Sarvodaya,' or welfare for all, and his vision for a decentralised political structure can be traced back to these formative influences. Inspired by Western models of governance, Gandhi sought to create a political system in India that prioritised the welfare and empowerment of all its citizens, particularly the marginalised and oppressed.

Moreover, the Western concept of individual rights and liberties found resonance in Gandhi's emphasis on personal responsibility and self-discipline. While advocating for individual rights, Gandhi also emphasised the importance of personal accountability and self-control in the pursuit of social and political change. He sought to integrate these ideas with his deep-rooted belief in the collective well-being of society, emphasising the interconnectedness of individuals and the importance of harmonising personal freedoms with the greater good.

However, Gandhi's engagement with Western thought was not uncritical. While he embraced certain aspects of Western ideologies, he remained acutely aware of their limitations and potential pitfalls, particularly regarding excessive materialism and individualism. Gandhi recognised the dangers of prioritising material wealth and personal gain over spiritual well-being and communal harmony, advocating instead for a balanced and spiritually grounded approach to life.

One of Gandhi's remarkable abilities was his capacity to synthesise Western ideas with his indigenous philosophy, creating a harmonious blend that enriched his understanding of human nature, society, and governance. Rather than viewing Western influences as a threat to Indian values, Gandhi saw them as complementary and mutually enriching. By integrating elements of Western thought with his deep-rooted commitment to Indian principles such as *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), and *dharma* (duty), Gandhi was able to develop a holistic worldview that transcended cultural boundaries.

Gandhi's synthesis of Western and Indian thought was evident in his approach to social and political activism. While drawing inspiration from Western thinkers

like Thoreau and Ruskin, Gandhi applied their ideas in the context of India's unique cultural and social fabric. For example, his philosophy of non-violent resistance, influenced by Thoreau's concept of civil disobedience, was rooted in Indian traditions of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*.

Furthermore, Gandhi's commitment to democratic principles and decentralised governance was informed by his exposure to Western models of governance, yet it was tempered by his belief in the village-based self-sufficient economy of India. He envisioned a political system that empowered local communities and prioritised the welfare of all citizens, drawing upon both Western and Indian ideas to shape his vision for a just and equitable society.

Gandhi's synthesis of Western ideas with his indigenous philosophy was a testament to his ability to discern universal principles amidst cultural diversity. The Western influences on his worldview did not dilute his commitment to Indian values; rather, they enriched and complemented his understanding of human nature, society, and governance.

### 1.2.3 Racial Segregation in South Africa and Its Impact

The British reign over South Africa during the 19th century was marked by a complex interplay of imperial expansion, colonial governance, and the intricate dynamics of race relations. As European powers vied for control over territories during the era of colonialism, the British Empire emerged as a dominant force in South Africa, leaving an indelible impact on the region's social, economic, and political landscape.

The Cape Colony, initially a Dutch settlement, came under British rule in 1806 as a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars. This shift in colonial authority set the stage for a period of British influence that would

shape the trajectory of South African history. The British administration brought with it not only the legal and bureaucratic systems of the Empire but also its attitudes and policies regarding race.

The 1800s witnessed the institutionalisation of racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa. The British introduced a series of legal measures that entrenched racial divisions, laying the groundwork for what would later evolve into the system of apartheid. Social and economic disparities between the colonists and indigenous populations were exacerbated, with the British implementing policies that favoured European settlers while marginalising and disenfranchising indigenous African communities.

The system of indentured labour, a practice in which individuals would work under a contract for a specified period in exchange for passage, accommodation, and sometimes wages, was initially implemented to address labour shortages in British colonies, including South Africa. However, the influx of Indian labourers further complicated the existing racial hierarchy in South Africa. The introduction of Indian labourers not only contributed to the economic development of South Africa but also reinforced racial divisions and tensions within society. At the top of the hierarchy were Europeans, who held political and economic power and enjoyed privileges and rights denied to other racial groups. Below them were Indian labourers, who were subjected to various forms of discrimination and exploitation despite their crucial role in the South African economy.

Finally, at the bottom of the hierarchy was the indigenous African population, who faced systematic oppression, dispossession of land, and restricted access to basic rights and opportunities. They were relegated to segregated neighbourhoods, schools, and



public facilities, further perpetuating the racial divide.

Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893 to work as a lawyer, and it was during his 21-year stay in the country that he developed his philosophy of non-violent resistance or satyagraha. The Second Boer War (1899-1902) intensified racial tensions as British authorities attempted to enlist the support of Indian communities. However, the aftermath of the war witnessed the institutionalisation of racial segregation and discrimination, culminating in the establishment of apartheid in the mid-20th century. The implementation of segregationist policies systematically oppressed non-white communities, restricting their rights and opportunities based on race.

Gandhi's experiences in South Africa provided him with firsthand knowledge of racial discrimination and the harsh realities faced by the Indian community. The discriminatory measures imposed by the British colonial authorities and later intensified by the colonial regime deeply affected Gandhi's psyche. During this time, he established the Natal Indian Congress in 1894, emerging as a key organisation advocating for the rights of the Indian community against discriminatory policies. His responses to these challenges were not only pragmatic but also transformative, setting the stage for his later activism against racial injustice in India.

## R Recap

- ◆ Porbandar shaped Gandhi's cultural perspective
- ◆ Karamchand Gandhi influenced communal harmony philosophy
- ◆ Putlibai's asceticism deeply influenced young Gandhi
- ◆ Ancient Indian texts inspired justice and non-violent resistance
- ◆ London's liberal education influenced his vision for society
- ◆ South African segregation fuelled his satyagraha philosophy
- ◆ Gandhi synthesised Western ideas
- ◆ British colonialism impacted Gandhi's activism
- ◆ South African experiences inspired Gandhi against injustice



## Objective Questions

1. What principle did Gandhi embrace from Jain philosophy?
2. Which essay by Henry David Thoreau deeply influenced Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance?
3. What concept did Gandhi draw from the *Bhagavad Gita*, emphasising it as a dynamic force for social and political change?
4. What was the name of the colonial system that enforced racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa?
5. In which year did Gandhi arrive in South Africa to work as a lawyer?
6. What was the position held by Karamchand Gandhi in the princely state of Porbandar?
7. Which philosophical concept did Gandhi draw from the *Upanishads*, emphasising the interconnectedness of all life?
8. Which organisation did Gandhi establish in 1894 to advocate for the rights of the Indian community?
9. What term did Gandhi coin to describe his philosophy of non-violent resistance, emphasising the power of truth in social and political change?
10. During which conflict did Gandhi serve as a stretcher bearer for the British Army?



## Answers

1. <i>Anekantavada</i>	6. <i>Diwan</i>
2. Civil Disobedience	7. <i>Atman</i>
3. <i>Ahimsa</i>	8. Natal Indian Congress
4. Apartheid	9. <i>Satyagraha</i>
5. 1893	10. Second Boer War





## Assignments

1. Explore the pivotal role played by the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in facilitating Mahatma Gandhi's activism and the advancement of the Indian community's rights in South Africa.
2. Explore the transformative impact of Mahatma Gandhi's experiments in South Africa on the development of his philosophy of non-violent resistance.



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## Unit 3

# Experience in South Africa

## L

### Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ gain insight into the evolution of *Satyagraha* as a powerful form of non-violent resistance
- ◆ analyse the significance of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in channelling the collective voice of the Indian community in South Africa
- ◆ grasp the fundamental principles of Gandhism distilled from Gandhi's South African experiences

## B

### Background

On June 7, 1893, at the age of 24, Gandhi experienced a pivotal incident that would profoundly shape his trajectory as a leader in the fight against racial discrimination. Travelling from Durban to Pretoria by train to represent his client, Dada Abdulla, Gandhi, despite holding a first-class ticket, was confronted by a conductor demanding he move to the third-class compartment due to his non-European status. Refusing to yield to this discriminatory demand, Gandhi's insistence on his rightful place in the first-class compartment sparked a confrontation, resulting in his forcible ejection from the train at Pietermaritzburg station.

Stranded at the station, Gandhi, in his autobiography, recounted the night spent contemplating the injustice he had endured. Shivering in the cold without his overcoat, he wrestled with the decision to return to India or press on to Pretoria, recognising the moral imperative to fulfil his obligation despite the insults.

Continuing his journey by stagecoach, Gandhi's ordeal persisted. A white coachman physically assaulted him as he attempted to board, further illustrating the pervasive racism he faced. Upon arrival in Johannesburg, seeking lodging at a hotel, Gandhi



was again confronted with discrimination as he was denied accommodation solely based on his race, despite being a paying customer.

The racial discrimination Gandhi encountered ignited a profound sense of moral outrage and determination within him. These experiences laid bare the brutal reality of discrimination and galvanised Gandhi's resolve to pursue equality, justice, and dignity for all. This pivotal moment propelled Gandhi onto a path of activism and advocacy, defining his legacy as one of the most influential leaders in the struggle for human rights and social justice.

## K

## Keywords

*Satyagraha*, Natal Indian Congress, Phoenix Farm, Volkstrust *Satyagraha*, Tolstoy Farm, Communal Living, Apartheid, *Swaraj*

## D

## Discussion

The humiliation young Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi experienced in South Africa fuelled his determination to mobilise the Indian community in Durban against the prevalent racial discrimination. This led to the formation of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in 1894, a platform through which Gandhi could address the grievances of the Indian community and advocate for their rights.

### 1.3.1 The Natal Indian Congress

The NIC served as a crucial vehicle for channelling the collective voice of the Indian community in South Africa. Gandhi, recognising the power of organised resistance, utilised the NIC to consolidate efforts against discriminatory policies and practices. Through this platform, he could

articulate the concerns and challenges faced by Indians, fostering a sense of solidarity among the community members.



Fig. 1.3.1 Founders of the Natal Indian Congress; Gandhi is in the top row, fourth from left.

Gandhi encountered a complex web of hostility orchestrated by European authorities, coupled with the vulnerability of Indian merchants and labourers from diverse religious backgrounds, including

Hindus, Parsis, Muslims, and Christians. All these groups shared a common plight: they lacked parliamentary representation. Despite their distinct differences, the Boers and Britons were united in preserving white hegemony and dominance. In 1894, the Natal Bar Association attempted to deny Gandhi membership solely because of his race.

After a brief trip back to India in 1896, Gandhi was recalled to Durban by the Natal Indian Congress. He was perceived as a troublemaker by the European community in South Africa, leading to significant protests from the white population who vehemently opposed his disembarkation from the ship. The ship remained in quarantine for a duration of three weeks. Local newspapers had circulated stories of an "Asiatic invasion", stoking large numbers of hostile working-class Europeans to mobilise onshore. Upon finally being granted permission to disembark, Gandhi faced a violent assault from the mob, resulting in a brutal beating. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain cabled the Natal government, urging them to hold accountable those responsible for the attack on Gandhi. However, Gandhi declined to pursue legal action against his assailants, stating that it was a principle for him not to seek remedy for a personal injustice through the legal system.

Gandhi's leadership within the NIC provided a structured framework for addressing issues ranging from legal discrimination to social injustices. The organisation became a hub for strategic planning, mobilisation, and peaceful resistance against oppressive measures. Initially, Gandhi's efforts in South Africa focused on advocating for the Indian community through letters, appeals, and publications like "The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa." In 1896, he distributed 10,000 copies of this pamphlet to address discriminatory practices. In 1903, he launched the newspaper Indian

Opinion to foster understanding between South African whites and Indians while addressing injustices.

Gandhi strategically targeted specific issues faced by Indians in Natal and the Transvaal, aiming to garner sympathy and challenge oppressive colonial policies. Despite criticism for his cautious approach, Gandhi's activism laid the foundation for his emergence as a political figure in South Africa.

With the outbreak of the Second Boer War in 1899, Gandhi contended that Indians, who demanded full citizenship rights in the British crown colony of Natal, had a duty to defend it. Organising an ambulance corps comprising 1,100 volunteers, including 300 free Indians and the majority being indentured labourers, Gandhi faced the task of fostering a sense of service among this diverse group, ranging from barristers and accountants to artisans and labourers.



Fig. 1.3.2 Mahatma Gandhi in the uniform of a warrant officer in 1899

The editor of the Pretoria News offered an insightful portrait of Gandhi in the battle zone:



“After a night’s work which had shattered men with much bigger frames, I came across Gandhi in the early morning sitting by the roadside eating a regulation army biscuit. Every man in Buller’s force was dull and depressed, and damnation was heartily invoked on everything. But Gandhi was stoical in his bearing, cheerful and confident in his conversation and had a kindly eye.”

However, the British winning the war didn't aid the Indians in South Africa. The new government in South Africa seemed to be forming a partnership, but it mainly involved Boers and Britons. Gandhi came to the realisation that despite his efforts, he had not significantly influenced the attitudes or behaviours of the South African Europeans, aside from a small number of Christian missionaries and idealistic youth. Faced with this reality, Gandhi made a strategic shift. He recognised that merely appealing to the conscience of the ruling class was insufficient to bring about meaningful change. Instead, he embraced a strategy of civil disobedience aimed at challenging the administration and confronting injustice directly through non-violent resistance.

The NIC became the focal point for Gandhi's early experiments with Satyagraha. One of the first major campaigns was against the Asiatic Registration Act of 1906, which required all Indians, 8 years and older, to register and carry passes. In response, Gandhi mobilised thousands of Indians at a mass gathering in Johannesburg on September 11, 1906, where the term "Satyagraha" was officially used for the first time. This campaign marked the beginning of a series of non-violent protests against unjust laws.

In 1913, Mahatma Gandhi launched the Volksrust Satyagraha, a pivotal protest aimed at challenging the oppressive pass laws in South Africa. These laws mandated that Indians carry passes, which served as a stark symbol of their marginalised and subjugated

status in society. Gandhi, recognising the inherent injustice of this regulation, boldly defied it through acts of civil disobedience. His refusal to comply with the discriminatory pass laws ultimately led to his arrest and subsequent imprisonment. During this tumultuous period, both Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba Gandhi, stood unwaveringly by his side, actively participating in acts of resistance against the unjust laws. Their principled defiance resulted in their incarceration.

The Volksrust Satyagraha quickly became a symbol of non-violent resistance against discriminatory policies. Gandhi's unwavering commitment to challenging the unjust pass laws inspired others to join him in peaceful protest. Despite facing arrests and imprisonment, the Satyagrahis, including Gandhi and Kasturba, remained resilient in their stance against injustice. Their courage and determination captured attention and garnered support both locally and internationally, shining a spotlight on the plight of Indians in South Africa and the power of non-violent resistance in effecting change.

The culmination of this Satyagraha was marked by the passing of the Indian Relief Act in 1914, which brought an end to the discriminatory pass laws. The success of the movement underscored the potency of non-violent resistance in effecting legislative change. Gandhi's strategic and principled approach in leading the Volksrust Satyagraha not only addressed the immediate issue but also contributed to the evolution of his philosophy of Satyagraha as a potent force against injustice.

### 1.3.2 Gandhism in the Making

Upon his arrival in South Africa in 1893, Gandhi was a young lawyer who, initially, did not identify strongly with any particular cause. However, the racial discrimination

he faced, including the infamous incident of being thrown off a train despite holding a first-class ticket, sparked a profound awakening. This marked the beginning of Gandhi's journey towards activism, as he started articulating the grievances of the Indian community and recognising the injustices prevalent in the racially stratified South African society.

One significant aspect of Gandhi's early activism was his engagement with legal processes. Initially seeking justice through the British legal system, he soon realised its limitations in addressing the systemic issues faced by Indians. This realisation laid the groundwork for the evolution of his philosophy beyond reliance on legal channels to a more profound commitment to moral and ethical principles.

The Boer War, during which Gandhi served as a stretcher-bearer, provided another layer to his evolving philosophy. Experiencing the brutality of war, witnessing suffering on both sides, and advocating for the humane treatment of prisoners of war influenced his growing commitment to non-violence and compassion. Gandhi's methods evolved beyond legal and organisational efforts to include constructive programmes aimed at building self-reliance within the Indian community.

### 1.3.2.1 The Tolstoy Farm

In 1910, against the backdrop of escalating racial discrimination in South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi embarked on a transformative experiment that would profoundly shape the formulation of Satyagraha. This pivotal moment in Gandhi's journey unfolded at the Tolstoy Farm. Established in 1910, the ashram initially functioned as the central hub for Gandhi's satyagraha campaign against discrimination towards Indians in Transvaal, its location at the time. This marked Gandhi's

second ashram in South Africa, the first being Phoenix Farm in Natal in 1904. Named after the influential Russian writer and philosopher Leo Tolstoy, whose book "The Kingdom of God Is Within You" significantly shaped Gandhi's non-violent philosophy, particularly Tolstoy's emphasis on non-violent resistance and the moral obligation to defy unjust laws. The Tolstoy Farm served as a residence for Gandhi and around seventy to eighty other individuals.

Hermann Kallenbach, a staunch supporter of Gandhi, generously allowed them to occupy the farm for the duration of their campaign. The name for the community was suggested by Kallenbach, who also played a role in the construction of three new buildings to accommodate living quarters, workshops, and a school. Notably, there were no hired servants on the farm, and all tasks, ranging from cooking to scavenging, were carried out by the residents themselves.

At Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi envisioned a space where residents could embody self-sufficiency, non-cooperation, and non-violent disobedience. The communal living arrangement aimed to cultivate an ethos of self-reliance and resilience against the discriminatory laws imposed on the Indian community. Residents, through their daily practices, sought to manifest the ideals of truth and non-violence in their actions.



Fig.1.3.3 Inmates of Tolstoy Farm in 1910, Gandhi is in the middle, second row fifth from the right

The Tolstoy Farm experiment was not merely a social or communal experiment; it was a profound manifestation of Gandhi's evolving philosophy. The intentional community became a laboratory where individuals engaged in the practical application of *Satyagraha*'s core tenets—truth, non-violence, and the willingness to endure suffering for a just cause.

Residents at Tolstoy Farm committed themselves to non-cooperation with unjust laws, refusing to comply with discriminatory regulations that targeted the Indian community. This collective resistance, grounded in moral principles, demonstrated the transformative power of non-violent disobedience as a means of confronting and challenging oppressive systems.

Gandhi's evolving philosophy in South Africa was characterised by a deepening commitment to non-violence as a transformative force. His experiences reinforced the belief that passive resistance, grounded in moral principles, could be a potent means to challenge and change oppressive systems. The South African years also witnessed the refinement of Gandhi's ideas on self-discipline, simplicity, and the pursuit of truth as essential components of a just and harmonious society.

### 1.3.2.2 Core Principles of Gandhism

Gandhism encapsulates a set of core principles that profoundly influenced his philosophy of life and activism. At its essence, Gandhism represents a holistic approach to personal, social, and political transformation. The first and foremost among these principles is *Ahimsa*, or non-violence. It serves as the cornerstone of Gandhism, advocating for the avoidance of harm to any living being. Stemming from Gandhi's encounters with racial discrimination in South Africa, *Ahimsa* became the guiding light for his commitment

to non-violence as a potent instrument for social and political change. For Gandhi, the path of non-violence was not merely a strategy but a way of life grounded in compassion and respect for all.

*Satyagraha*, another vital principle, underscores the pursuit of truth through non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. Shaped by Gandhi's experiences in South Africa, especially during the Asiatic Registration Act campaign in 1906, *Satyagraha* became the driving force behind his activism. It symbolises the power of truth-force or soul-force in challenging unjust systems and ideologies. Through *Satyagraha*, Gandhi sought to awaken the moral conscience of oppressors, fostering a transformative dialogue rooted in truth and empathy.

*Sarvodaya*, meaning the welfare of all, reflects Gandhi's commitment to social equality and the upliftment of the marginalised and oppressed. Informed by the injustices he witnessed in South Africa, this principle advocates for a society where the well-being of every individual is prioritised. *Sarvodaya* encompasses not just material welfare but also social justice, emphasising the creation of a community where the weakest members are empowered and uplifted.

*Swaraj*, or self-rule, is another key tenet of Gandhism born out of Gandhi's experiences in South Africa. It advocates for decentralisation of power and governance, emphasising community-based structures. For Gandhi, true self-rule extended beyond political independence to the ability of communities to govern themselves in a decentralised and participatory manner. This principle challenges the concentration of power and encourages local autonomy.

Trusteeship, the final principle, advocates for the responsible use of wealth and resources for the collective good. Informed by Gandhi's experiences and observations of

economic disparities, trusteeship proposes a model where individuals consider themselves trustees of their wealth, utilising it not for personal gain but for the benefit of society.

It promotes a conscientious and equitable distribution of resources, urging individuals to adopt a sense of stewardship for the common good.

## R Recap

- ◆ Gandhi faced racial injustice on a train in South Africa
- ◆ Sparked his activism and the formation of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC)
- ◆ NIC became a key platform for Indian community resistance
- ◆ Gandhi's involvement in the NIC led to harassment by Europeans
- ◆ Gandhi organised an Indian ambulance corps in the Boer War
- ◆ British victory didn't alleviate the plight of Indians
- ◆ It laid the foundation for his core principles
- ◆ The principles - *Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Sarvodaya, Swaraj*, and Trusteeship
- ◆ The Tolstoy Farm experiment - non-violent disobedience against discriminatory laws
- ◆ Commitment to non-violence and transformative resistance

## O Objective Questions

1. What was the name of the *ashram* where Gandhi initiated a transformative experiment in 1910?
2. What influential book significantly shaped Gandhi's non-violent philosophy, particularly emphasising non-violent resistance?
3. What principle served as the cornerstone of Gandhism, advocating for the avoidance of harm to any living being?
4. What term symbolises the pursuit of truth through non-violent resistance and civil disobedience in Gandhi's philosophy?
5. What principle advocated for decentralisation of power and governance, emphasising community-based structures, in Gandhi's philosophy?



6. What principle reflects Gandhi's commitment to social equality and the upliftment of the marginalised?
7. Who was Gandhi's first client that he represented in South Africa?
8. What principle urges individuals to consider themselves trustees of their wealth, utilising it for the benefit of society?
9. In which year did Gandhi initiate the Volksrust Satyagraha, a significant protest against oppressive pass laws in South Africa?
10. What legislation, passed in 1914, brought an end to discriminatory pass laws in South Africa following Gandhi's resistance efforts?
11. What was the primary purpose of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in South Africa?
12. Who generously allowed Gandhi and around seventy to eighty others to occupy the Tolstoy Farm during his satyagraha campaign in South Africa?
13. When did Gandhi establish his first *ashram* in South Africa?

## A *Answers*

1. Tolstoy Farm
2. "The Kingdom of God Is Within You"
3. *Ahimsa*
4. *Satyagraha*
5. *Swaraj*
6. *Sarvodaya*
7. Dada Abdullah
8. Trusteeship
9. 1913
10. Indian Relief Act 1914
11. Indian rights and challenging discriminatory policies
12. Hermann Kallenbach
13. 1904

# A

## Assignments

1. What were the key factors that led Gandhi to resist racial injustice? How did it influence Gandhi's subsequent activism and the development of his philosophy of *Satyagraha*?
2. Examine the evolution of Gandhi's philosophy during his time in South Africa. How did Gandhi's experiences in South Africa shape his beliefs and approach to activism?
3. Discuss the relevance and application of Gandhi's principles in addressing contemporary social and political challenges.

# R

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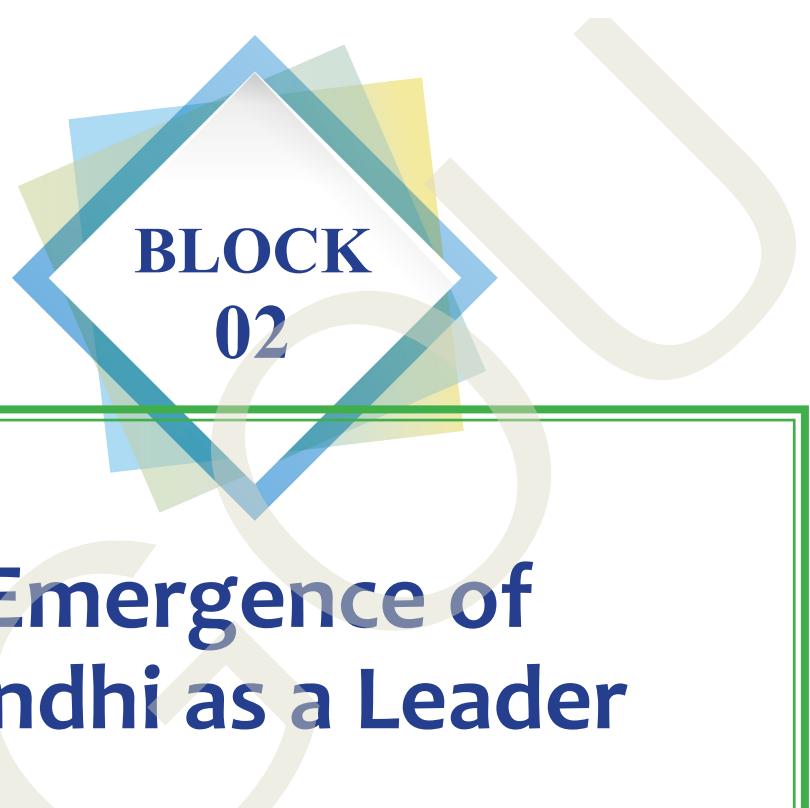
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**BLOCK  
02**

## **Emergence of Gandhi as a Leader**

### L

### Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ get familiarised with Gandhian Satyagraha, Gandhian Ahimsa, and Civil Disobedience
- ♦ get introduced to the essence of Gandhi's teachings
- ♦ learn about the convictions and strategic engagements of Gandhiji

### B

### Background

While Gandhi was in South Africa, once on his travel to Pretoria by train, Gandhi faced a moment that changed the course of his life forever. While he was seated in a first-class compartment, a conductor approached him and demanded he move to the third-class carriage reserved for non-white passengers, solely because of his skin colour. Young Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who arrived in South Africa as a qualified lawyer to establish his career, was stunned by this act of discrimination and refused to budge. He remained firm in his resolve despite the conductor's threats and confrontation. Eventually, Gandhiji was thrown off the train at Pietermaritzburg station. This incident ignited a fire within him and prompted him to fight against the racism and injustice that plagued South African society. In the following years, Gandhi immersed himself in the struggles of the Indian community in South Africa. He led protests, organised campaigns, and advocated for their rights. Through continuous efforts, he not only challenged the oppressive apartheid regime but also laid the groundwork for a new philosophy of resistance – one rooted in the principles of truth, non-violence, and civil disobedience. It led Gandhi from being a young lawyer to becoming the revered 'Mahatma'. It was in South Africa that the seeds of his revolutionary ideas were sown – ideas that led to a movement for justice and freedom. In this unit on Gandhian philosophy, let us delve into the principles and teachings of Gandhi that influenced Indian society.



# K

## Keywords

*Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Civil Disobedience, Ideology, National Movement*

# D

## Discussion

Gandhi's formative experience in South Africa helped him evolve a distinctive political style and leadership. He refined his political approach, experimented with innovative methods of resistance, and steered the movement. He was well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his method. The South African experiments prepared him for the daunting leadership role later in India. Upon his return in January 1915, Gandhiji was well received in India. His achievements in South Africa were known among the educated Indian elite, and the masses accepted him. In the initial year, Gandhiji extensively travelled to observe the conditions of India firsthand. To promote community life, he established an ashram in Ahmedabad with his followers who accompanied him from South Africa. However, Gandhiji's distinctive political understanding did not align with the prevailing political currents in India.



Fig.2.1.1 Gandhi in South Africa

While influenced by Western ideas, the roots of Gandhian philosophy in ancient Indian culture and the incorporation of timeless moral and religious principles distinguish it as a blend of the traditional and modern. The essence of Gandhi's teaching lies in the four pillars: truth, non-violence, *Sarvodaya* and *Satyagraha*. These principles form the foundation of Gandhian thought.

Gandhian philosophy is the religious and social ideologies embraced and developed by Mahatma Gandhi, primarily during his tenure in South Africa from 1893 to 1914 and subsequently in India. This philosophy has extended its influence through the works of later Gandhian thinkers such as Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, and even globally, as seen in figures like Martin Luther King Jr. The philosophy has various dimensions, including the spiritual, moral, political, economic, social, and individual and collective aspects, all rooted in the belief in the universe as an organic whole.

### 2.1.1 Ahimsa

At the heart of Gandhi's philosophy lie the twin cardinal principles of truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*). *Satya*, derived from 'sat' meaning 'that which exists,' includes both relative truthfulness in word and deed and the absolute truth, which Gandhi equates with God. Similarly, *ahimsa* is not merely the absence of violence but an active expression

of love, the antithesis of violence in every sense. *Ahimsa*'s significance in Gandhian philosophy emanates from two key points. Firstly, if all life is perceived as one in the Divine Reality, any violence inflicted upon another is essentially self-destructive, violating the universal law of life, which is love. Secondly, Gandhi believed in the inherent power of *ahimsa* and considered it the most potent force in existence. Non-violence, or love, is thus regarded as the highest law of humankind.



Fig. 2.1.2 Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi's philosophy underlines that *ahimsa* is not only a means of resistance but also a foundation for the search for truth. The realisation dawns that any pursuit of truth devoid of *ahimsa* as its foundation is futile. This philosophy encourages individuals to resist and challenge systems while maintaining a commitment to non-violence. Gandhi draws a crucial distinction between resisting a system and attacking its creator. He asserts that attacking the author of a system is akin to attacking oneself. By recognising our shared humanity and divine origin, Gandhi argues that we are interconnected, making harm to one individual a detriment to the entire world.

Gandhian philosophy emphasises the idea that all individuals share a common lineage

as offspring of the same Creator. This shared connection suggests that the divine powers within each person are boundless. Thus, any disregard or harm to a single human being is seen as an affront not only to that individual but also to the collective divine essence within humanity. This reciprocity reinforces the importance of treating each individual with respect and dignity. Gandhian philosophy is rooted in the principle of *ahimsa* and presents a deeper understanding of truth-seeking and the interconnectedness of humanity.

Gandhi viewed *ahimsa* not merely as the absence of physical violence but as a comprehensive principle that includes all aspects of life. He recognised the inherent challenges in living without committing outward *himsa* (violence). He acknowledged that even the most basic activities like eating and moving involve some form of destruction. The essence of *ahimsa* lies in compassionate actions and constant efforts to minimise harm. Gandhi emphasised the unity of all life and asserted that the error or *himsa* committed by one individual affects the collective whole. He recognised that as long as individuals are part of society, they participate in *himsa*. Gandhi outlined his stance on wars. He emphasised that the duty of an advocate of *ahimsa* is to actively work towards ending conflicts. Gandhi's reflections on his participation in the war effort during his time in England show the nuanced approach he took in aligning his actions with his principles.

Gandhi's philosophy was not a rigid doctrine but a set of beliefs applied contextually. Therefore, it resists dogmatism, and inconsistencies are not considered sinful. Gandhi himself acknowledged the evolution of his interpretations and the inconsistencies within his writings. He expressed, 'I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search for Truth, I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new



things.' Gandhian philosophy had undergone a continuous process of refinement. It evolved in response to changing historical and social contexts.

Despite being deeply rooted in the Indian social context, Gandhian philosophy is considered universal and timeless by its followers. The core ideals of truth and non-violence, which form the foundation of this philosophy, are believed to be relevant to all of humanity. The universal nature of Gandhian philosophy persists and transcends religious boundaries by underlining common beliefs shared among major religions.

Furthermore, Gandhian philosophy aligns with the notion of gradual moral evolution for human beings. Gandhi viewed conflict as inevitable yet not always undesirable. It does not necessitate violence as its outcome. Gandhi's philosophy asserts that humans possess the capacity to resolve conflicts non-violently, and liberation from a violent society is seen as a long-term goal which requires sustained effort over many decades. Crucially, Gandhian philosophy is not a mere intellectual doctrine but a practical guide born out of action which was shaped by a man of action. Gandhi's reluctance to address topics without personal experience indicates this pragmatic approach. The objective is to progress towards a non-violent political, economic, and social order through non-violent struggle, which is enclosed in the concept of *Sarvodaya*-meaning the welfare of all without exception.

The foundation of this non-violent social order is rooted in religious or spiritual principles and prompted a moral and humanistic perspective on economic and political questions. This philosophy is also centred on ideals such as political decentralisation. It aims to prevent excessive concentration of power and promote a direct and participatory democracy structured from the grassroots level to the national and international tiers.

## 2.1.2 Self-Transformation

Gandhian philosophy is basically centred on self-transformation. Individuals are urged to sincerely strive to live by the principles of truth and non-violence, which form the moral base of this philosophy. These principles include resisting injustice, cultivating a spirit of service, embracing selflessness and sacrifice, prioritising responsibilities over rights, practising self-discipline, leading a simple lifestyle (voluntarily), and promoting truthful and non-violent relationships with others. It is important to note that Gandhi does not advocate for poverty but emphasises voluntary simplicity.

For a Gandhian, avoiding political office and remaining impartial towards formal party politics is encouraged. However, this doesn't mean complete disengagement from politics. Gandhi recognised that sometimes non-violent engagement with political power is essential to resist injustice, as seen in the freedom struggle against the British Empire. The ultimate responsibility of a Gandhian is to resist clear injustice and untruth, either independently or in collaboration. Non-violent resistance is preferred whenever possible. But Gandhi acknowledged the use of violent means in certain circumstances. He expressed a preference for non-violent resistance, followed by violence in a just cause, and least of all, apathy.



Fig. 2.1.3 Gandhi using Charka

Self-transformation in Gandhi's philosophy is a deliberate and lifelong process. It emphasises gradual reform rather than hasty attempts to become a *Mahatma* overnight. Gandhi viewed his own life as an ongoing process of development that was marked by continual experimentation with truth to recognise the truthful path. This approach, deeply rooted in high idealism, addresses down-to-earth moral, political, and social needs. Reason and conscience play major roles in determining the truthful path that allows individuals to put their ideas to personal scrutiny. Gandhi valued reason and rationality, influenced by Western thought. The ideal is to achieve harmony between thought, word, and action and to reflect an authentic alignment between the outer and inner life.

### 2.1.3 Satyagraha

One of the key pillars of Gandhi's philosophy is *Satyagraha*, which is broadly defined as a philosophy of non-violence. It also serves as a specific technique or tool of non-violent action. *Satyagraha* was originally developed by Gandhi in South Africa to empower the Indian population against colonial injustices. *Satyagraha* has non-violence at its core, seeking to convert, persuade, or win over opponents through the forces of reason and conscience. The *Satyagrahi*, while upholding the indisputable truth of their position, willingly undergoes acts of voluntary self-suffering. Any violence inflicted by the opponent is accepted without retaliation. That is to morally bankrupt the opponent who might justify violence if met with resistance.

Various methods, primarily non-cooperation and fasting, can be used in a *Satyagraha* campaign. This approach operates on the belief in the inherent goodness of the opponent and their potential to acknowledge and rectify injustices or at least compromise. *Satyagraha* is inherently creative, promoting

no enmity, hatred, or lasting bitterness but mutual regard. Successful campaigns result in transformed relationships, turning former opponents into friends, with no losers, only winners. A truthful

*Satyagraha* campaign that demands courage, self-discipline, and humility exerts significant moral pressure and can lead to transformations. It is crucial to understand that *Satyagraha* is viable only in causes that are indisputably just and truthful. A genuine spirit of non-violence must permeate the campaign. Any insincerity or lack of a just cause diverges from Gandhi's intended meaning of *Satyagraha*.

By challenging colonial rule through his philosophy, he conveyed a sense of moral superiority. This approach, based on non-violence, not only enriched Gandhi's personal and political style but also served as a fundamental aspect of his philosophy.



Fig. 2.1.4 Gandhi at Dandi March

### 2.1.4 Civil Disobedience

Mahatma Gandhi found civil disobedience to be a potent form of protest and urged people to shed their fear of imprisonment and embrace the cause with unyielding bravery. Gandhi realised that defiance against imperial rule would become a moral obligation. He called upon each citizen to leave aside their apprehensions and join the movement wholeheartedly. He appealed to the people to be as fearless as soldiers marching into battle. Gandhi stressed the importance of exhibiting similar courage in the face of oppression.



A significant part of this Gandhian philosophy was the belief that a mass surrender to unarmed authorities, rather than resorting to violence or confrontation, would demonstrate strength and resolve. He argued that the government thrived on people's fear of incarceration, and by overcoming this fear, one could assert their true fortitude and determination.

For Gandhi, discipline and restraint were fundamental aspects of any successful civil

disobedience campaign. He emphasised the importance of adhering to principles of non-violence and maintaining peaceful conduct to achieve swifter victories. Gandhi's unconventional approach to resistance proved effective in the Indian freedom struggle. It ultimately weakened the British administration and hastened India's independence.

## R Recap

- ◆ Gandhi's experience in South Africa
- ◆ Fight against racism and injustice
- ◆ Gandhian philosophy rooted in ancient Indian culture
- ◆ Foundation of Gandhian thought
- ◆ Ideologies developed by Gandhi during his time in South Africa
- ◆ Twin cardinal principles of truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*)
- ◆ Ahimsa as a means of resistance and foundation for the search for truth
- ◆ Emphasis on self-transformation
- ◆ Key components of Gandhi's philosophy - *Satyagraha*, civil disobedience, and self-transformation
- ◆ Universal and timeless, transcending religious boundaries
- ◆ Evolution in thoughts as a response to changing historical and social contexts
- ◆ Methods of *Satyagraha* - non-violence, discipline, and adherence to principles of truth in the pursuit of justice and freedom



## Objective Questions

1. What incident prompted Gandhi to fight against racism and injustice in South Africa?
2. What are the twin cardinal principles at the heart of Gandhi's philosophy?
3. What is the significance of *ahimsa* in Gandhian philosophy?
4. Where did Gandhi develop his idea of Satyagraha?
5. What does *Satyagraha* mean in Gandhi's philosophy?
6. When did Gandhi return to India from South Africa?
7. How did Gandhi view self-transformation in his philosophy?
8. What does the concept of *Sarvodaya* stand for?
9. What did Gandhi believe was the ultimate responsibility of a Gandhian?
10. Where did Gandhi establish his first ashram in India?
11. How did Gandhi perceive civil disobedience as a form of protest?
12. What were the primary methods used in a *Satyagraha* campaign?
13. What role did discipline and restraint play in Gandhi's concept of civil disobedience?
14. What are the four pillars of Gandhi's teaching?
15. According to Gandhi, what would demonstrate strength and resolve in civil disobedience?



## Answers

1. Being thrown off a train in South Africa
2. Truth (*satya*) and Non-violence (*ahimsa*)
3. It is not merely the absence of violence but an active expression of love, the antithesis of violence in every sense
4. South Africa
5. A philosophy of non-violence, seeking to convert, persuade, or win over opponents through the forces of reason and conscience
6. January 1915



7. As a deliberate and lifelong process, emphasising gradual reform rather than hasty attempts to become a Mahatma overnight
8. Welfare of all without exception.
9. To resist clear injustice and untruth, either independently or in collaboration, preferably through non-violent means
10. Ahmedabad
11. As a potent form of protest, Gandhi urged people to shed their fear of imprisonment and embrace the cause with unyielding bravery
12. Non-cooperation and fasting
13. Discipline and restraint were fundamental aspects, emphasising peaceful conduct and adherence to non-violence principles to achieve swifter victories
14. Truth, Non-violence, *Sarvodaya* and *Satyagraha*
15. A mass surrender to unarmed authorities by demonstrating courage and fearlessness

## A

## Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of *Satyagraha* in Gandhi's philosophy and explain its principles and methods. Provide examples of *Satyagraha* campaigns led by Gandhi.
2. Explain Gandhi's concept of self-transformation and its role in his philosophy. Discuss the principles and practices advocated by Gandhi for individuals to achieve self-transformation.
3. Analyse Gandhi's view on civil disobedience as a form of protest. Examine its effectiveness in challenging colonial oppression and achieving social and political change.
4. Discuss the principles and methods advocated by Gandhi for conducting civil disobedience campaigns.



## S

## Suggested Reading

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## R

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1. Chandra B. *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*. Penguin Books, 1989.
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## Unit 2

# Gandhian Leadership and Popular Movements

### L

## Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get introduced to the application of Gandhian philosophy such as Non-violence, Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience in the Indian context
- ◆ get familiarised with the strategic engagements of Gandhiji in achieving his goals
- ◆ develop an understanding of the Gandhian leadership in the popular movements

### B

## Background

Following the Salt March, Gandhi was invited for negotiations with the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. It was a moment that would go down in history as a testament to the power of dialogue and negotiation. When offered a cup of tea, Gandhi, with his characteristic wit and humility, added a pinch of 'tax-free' salt. Then he humourously connected it to the historic Boston Tea Party. Irwin described the meeting as 'the most striking personal interaction between a Viceroy and an Indian leader.' This incident shows Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution through constructive dialogue and peaceful negotiation rather than confrontation. The actions of Gandhi reflect his commitment to challenging unjust laws through non-violent means and set him apart as a visionary leader.

The historic Salt March of 1930 was a significant moment in the fight for India's independence and an example of Gandhian leadership in action. The Salt March was not just a protest against an unjust tax on salt; it was a strong statement of resistance against colonial oppression. Gandhi, in his humble attire, led the march from Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal town of Dandi. There he defied British law by producing salt from the seawater. But what made the Salt March so impactful was his adherence to non-violent resistance and his ability to attract the masses. Through his interactions, Gandhi cultivated a sense of shared purpose and collective

agency among the Indians. He emphasised the dignity and worth of every individual. By examining Gandhi's strategic actions, diplomatic negotiations, and philosophy, one can understand the significance of Gandhian leadership and the impact he had on the lives of millions of Indians and the course of history itself.

## K Keywords

Champaran Satyagraha, Ahmedabad Mill Strike, *Rowlatt Satyagraha*, *Khilafat*, Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience

## D Discussion

The South African experience not only refined Gandhi's philosophy but also prepared him for the leadership role later in India. His philosophy had evolved from non-violent civil disobedience in South Africa, which often culminated in negotiations with the opponent. Gandhiji tried to apply this method of struggle in India on a broader scale. In South Africa, he led the Indian labourers who showed endurance, sacrifice, and resilience in their hardships. This made Gandhi believe in the ability of the Indian people to sacrifice for a cause. His leadership in South Africa cut across various boundaries. Under his leadership, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Parsis, rich merchants, and poor labourers were all united. He realised that leaders often make decisions that sometimes may not align with the enthusiasm of their followers. That is how South Africa prepared the ground for Gandhi's leadership in the Indian National Struggle.

Gandhiji believed that the conventional political methods were not that effective, but *Satyagraha* was the only method of struggle

which could be viable in the prevailing situation in India. He expressed his reluctance to join any new organisation. He stated that he would join any organisation or movement only if it followed non-violent satyagraha as its method of struggle. However, it does not imply that he was not politically active during this time. He actively participated in three notable struggles in 1917 and early 1918: in Champaran (Bihar), Ahmedabad, and Kheda (Gujarat). These struggles were centred around specific local issues and were waged for the economic demands of the masses. Champaran and Kheda involved the peasants, while the Ahmedabad struggle involved industrial workers.

### 2.2.1 Champaran Movement

In Champaran, the European planters forced cultivators to plant indigo on a major portion of their land. Later, when the German synthetic dyes replaced indigo, they increased rent and other illicit dues in return for the release of the cultivators from indigo cultivation. Even though the



local communities had resisted since 1908, the major turn happened when Raj Kumar Shukla, a local man, reached out to Gandhiji. He recognised Gandhiji as a champion for the rights of the exploited and the poor. Hence, he followed Gandhiji all over the country to convince him to visit Champaran.

When Gandhiji arrived at Champaran, the Commissioner ordered him to leave the district immediately. Surprisingly, Gandhiji refused and willingly accepted the punishment for challenging the law. It was an unprecedented move, which was distinct from the approaches of other leaders such as Tilak and Annie Besant. Gandhi's act marked the beginning of passive resistance and civil disobedience as a response to oppressive orders. During that time, the Government of India had not yet begun to consider Gandhiji as a rebel. Hence, they allowed him to proceed with his inquiry.



Fig. 2.2.1 Gandhi at Champaran (1917)

Source Credit : Wikipedia

Gandhiji was hence allowed to carry out his enquiry on the issues of the peasants. His method was distinctive yet effective. Alongside colleagues like Brij Kishore, Rajendra Prasad, Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh, and J.B. Kripalani, Gandhiji toured villages and recorded the statements of peasants. They ensured the accuracy of their information through careful interrogation of almost 8000 peasants. Later, to enquire about the situation, the Government appointed a Commission with Gandhi as one of the members. Gandhi could negotiate with the planters regarding the compensation of the

peasants. His far-sightedness is visible in this case, as he demanded a 25 per cent refund from the planters. When he was asked why he didn't demand a full refund, he expressed his concern that it would adversely affect the planters. His prediction became true when the planters left the place entirely within a decade.

## 2.2.2 Gandhi in Ahmedabad Mill Strike

Let us now focus more on the exceptional leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the influence of his philosophy and methods that were instrumental in addressing social issues. Through the interventions with the workers of Ahmedabad, Gandhi showed his leadership skills by addressing labour disputes. Gandhiji focused his attention towards the conflict in Ahmedabad between workers and mill owners over the withdrawal of a 'plague bonus.' The mill owners decided to revoke the bonus after the epidemic. Meanwhile, the workers, who had to face an increased cost of living due to the war, opposed the decision. They insisted that the enhancement would not even compensate for their requirements. At this juncture, the British sought Gandhi's involvement to mediate and facilitate a compromise. Hence, Gandhiji attempted to find a solution through his friend, Amabalal Sarabhai, who was a mill owner. Despite initial agreement on arbitration, the mill owners withdrew and offered a twenty percent bonus. Also, they threatened with dismissal for non-compliance.

The breach of the agreement made Gandhi call for a strike. Based on a thorough analysis of production costs, industry profits, and the cost of living, he demanded a thirty-five per cent increase in the wages of the workers. Meanwhile, Gandhiji addressed workers daily and issued a news bulletin. He emphasised non-violence in their dealings with employers and strikebreakers.

As weariness set in among the workers and attendance at the meetings declined, Gandhiji decided to shift his method of struggle. He decided to go on a fast to strengthen their determination and fulfil his promise. He declared that he would be the first to starve if the strike led to starvation. The fast not only motivated the workers but also put pressure on the mill owners. Eventually, they agreed to submit the entire issue to a tribunal. The strike was withdrawn, and the tribunal later granted the demanded thirty-five per cent increase to the workers.

Simultaneously, Gandhiji learned of the distress faced by peasants in the Kheda district of Gujarat due to crop failures. The government did not pay heed to their plea for land revenue remission. The Gujarat Sabha, under Gandhi's presidency, advised the peasants to withhold revenue and urged them to resist the oppression. Champaran, Ahmedabad, and Kheda reflect the Gandhian style and political method. All these experiences deepened his understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the people. He could affirm the feasibility of his unique approach. People were impressed by his dedication to their causes. His commitment to the ordinary people earned him the respect and support of political workers, particularly the younger generation.

### 2.2.3 Rowlatt Satyagraha

The events leading up to the *Satyagraha* and its unexpected turn, along with the tragic event at Jallianwala Bagh, show Gandhi's commitment to non-violent resistance. In February 1919, Gandhiji called for a nationwide protest against the British introducing unpopular legislation known as the Rowlatt Bills. These bills aimed to curb the freedom of the people under the guise of countering extreme violence. They led to widespread discontent among Indians.



Fig. 2.2.2 Martial law declared in Amritsar, Lahore and Kasur

Source credit : archive.lumps.edu.pk

When constitutional protests failed, Gandhiji proposed a nationwide Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills. Hence, the *Satyagraha* Sabha was formed. The protest was marked by a *hartal* (strike), accompanied by fasting and prayer. Apart from this method, it was planned to observe civil disobedience against certain laws. However, the Satyagraha faced unexpected challenges. Instead of the decided date of April 6, Delhi observed *hartal* on March 30, which ended up in violence. Similar patterns were followed by other regions, particularly in Punjab. At this time, Punjab was severely affected by wartime repression, forced recruitment, and disease. When the situation escalated, Gandhiji attempted to intervene in Punjab to pacify the people. However, he was deported to Bombay.



Fig. 2.2.3 An illustration of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

Source credit : mkgandhi.org

Events took a tragic turn in Punjab on April 13, during Baisakhi celebrations. General Dyer ordered troops to open fire on an unarmed crowd at Jallianwala Bagh, resulting in hundreds of casualties. It brought shock to the country and resulted in intensified repression and martial law in Punjab. The severity of the violence and atrocities made Gandhiji call back the Satyagraha on April 18. However, this withdrawal didn't diminish his faith in non-violent resistance or the Indian people's capacity to adopt it. The next year, he launched another significant nationwide struggle, motivated, in a way, by the injustices inflicted on Punjab.

## 2.2.4 Khilafat and Non-Cooperation

In the early 1920s, India found itself in a state of discontent, fuelled by events such as the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and martial law in Punjab. Despite generous wartime promises, the British let down the Indians, and the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms offered little solace. The disillusionment was widespread and extended to Indian Muslims, who felt betrayed by broken assurances regarding Turkey and the aftermath of the inquiry of the Hunter Committee into the Punjab disturbances.

By the end of the first quarter of 1920, the excuses favouring the British Government began to diminish rapidly. The Khilafat leaders, who sought support for their cause, realised that their expectations would not be met. Meanwhile, the Treaty of Sevres in May 1920 solidified the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire. Gandhiji, having closely aligned himself with the Khilafat leaders, saw this as a breach of faith by the British. In February 1920, he proposed a non-violent non-cooperation programme to protest the government's actions. The Khilafat Committee unanimously accepted Gandhi's suggestion on June 9, 1920, to adopt

non-cooperation. They urged him to lead the movement. Simultaneously, Congress, disheartened with constitutional means after the Hunter Committee Report, considered non-cooperation. The AICC convened in May 1920, foreseeing the need for decisive action amid the palpable desire for change among the people.

The majority of the population was awakened to political consciousness over the past four decades. They felt deeply insulted by British mistreatment. Economic distress further fuelled discontent, affecting workers, artisans, the middle class, and rural communities who were facing hardships with high prices, food shortages, and the impacts of drought and epidemics.

The Non-Cooperation Movement, a manifestation of Gandhi's principles, was officially launched on August 1, 1920, following Gandhiji's notice to the Viceroy on June 22. This notice emphasised the right of subjects to refuse cooperation with a misruling authority. The movement coincided with the day of mourning for Lokamanya Tilak. In September, during the Congress meeting in Calcutta, non-cooperation was embraced as a central theme. Leaders like C.R. Das initially opposed and questioned the boycott of legislative councils. However, the opposition gradually waned. By December, when the movement gained momentum, the boycott of councils was no longer a point of contention.

The Nagpur session in December solidified the commitment of Congress to non-cooperation. The programme included surrendering titles and boycotting government-affiliated institutions, law courts, and foreign cloth. It also advocated for the establishment of national schools, the promotion of hand-spinning and weaving, and the fostering of Hindu-Muslim unity. To align with the new commitment, Congress

underwent significant changes. The goal shifted from self-government through legal means to the peaceful attainment of Swaraj.

Provincial Committees were organised on a linguistic basis, ensuring local language connectivity, and committees were established at the village and mohalla levels. Gandhi's restructuring aimed at inclusivity by reducing membership fees and enabling the poor to join. The organisation also embraced Hindi, streamlined its structure, and democratised its decision-making processes, hence reaching down to the grassroots level. Gandhian leadership during the Non-Cooperation Movement shows how Gandhi's philosophy reshaped the Congress and propelled a mass movement towards Swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means. The Congress formally embraced the Non-Cooperation Movement, originally initiated by the Khilafat Conference. Starting from January 1921, the movement gained substantial traction nationwide. Gandhiji, accompanied by the Ali brothers, played a crucial role, conducting a nationwide tour marked by impassioned speeches and interactions with political activists.

The movement saw an educational boycott, with thousands of students leaving conventional institutions to join over 800 national schools and colleges across the country. Bengal, under the leadership of C.R. Das and Subhash Bose, stood out in the success of the educational boycott. The boycott of foreign cloth, on the other hand, emerged as a highly successful aspect of the movement. Volunteers collected foreign cloth for bonfires, hence reducing its imports and rekindling the Swadeshi spirit. Charkhas were promoted extensively, and khadi became the symbol of the national movement.

The movement faced challenges with clashes during the Prince of Wales's visit and subsequent riots. However, non-cooperators, marked by their defiance, became more

assertive. The Non-Cooperation Movement spurred local movements across India. In U.P. and Kerala, it merged with existing movements, while in Assam, labour strikes occurred. Local protests against zamindari exploitation, defiance of forest laws, and movements for better living conditions all found inspiration in the spirit of unrest fostered by the Non-Cooperation Movement. The Non-Cooperation Movement transcended its original goals to inspire diverse movements across the nation. Gandhi's philosophy and strategic initiatives shaped a period of unprecedented social and political change.

Let us have a look at the complex decisions made by Gandhi, the challenges faced, and the controversies surrounding the movement's end. Initially, the government adopted a non-repressive stance, avoiding action against the Non-Cooperation Movement. However, as the movement gained momentum, the government shifted its strategy. In September 1920, it refrained from repression, believing it would only fuel nationalist fervour. By December 1921, faced with increasing unrest, the government declared the Volunteer Corps illegal. This led to widespread arrests. Gandhi faced mounting pressure from within the Congress to escalate the movement into mass civil disobedience. The Ahmedabad Congress in December 1921 bestowed upon him the sole authority to make this critical decision. Despite repeated appeals, the government showed no signs of relenting. This prompted Gandhi to consider the next phase of the movement.

The turning point came with the tragic incident in Chauri Chaura on February 5, 1922. A clash between a Congress-Khilafat procession and the police resulted in the deaths of 22 policemen. Gandhi was disturbed by the violence. He decided to withdraw the movement and urged the Congress Working Committee to ratify his decision. On February 12, 1922, the Non-Cooperation Movement concluded.



Gandhi's decision to withdraw sparked controversies and criticism. Many prominent leaders, including Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhash Bose, expressed bewilderment. Critics across the period accused Gandhi of betraying the movement, suggesting hidden motives linked to the fear of radical forces emerging within the masses. Despite criticisms, a fair examination of Gandhi's decision suggests a nuanced understanding. The argument that withdrawal aimed at protecting the propertied classes may oversimplify Gandhi's complex motives. The Chauri Chaura incident served as a catalyst, but Gandhi's concerns extended beyond isolated violence, considering the broader implications on a national scale. Several factors may have influenced Gandhi's decision. The potential repression the movement faced, signs of ebbing enthusiasm in various parts of the country, and the inherent tendency of mass movements to require breathing space for consolidation and recuperation are all critical aspects in understanding the timing of the withdrawal.



Fig. 2.2.4 Chauri Chaura Incident  
Source Credit : *Telegraph India*

Critics often overlook the inherent nature of mass movements, which tend to ebb after reaching a peak. Gandhi understood the need for periodic withdrawal and consolidation to prevent exhaustion and maintain long-term momentum. Withdrawal, therefore, should not be equated with betrayal but viewed as an essential aspect of a strategic approach based on mass mobilisation. While the timing of Gandhi's withdrawal may be subject to debate, it is plausible that he believed it was the right

moment to regroup and reassess. With the movement already enduring for over a year and no prospects for negotiation with the government, Gandhi's decision to retreat with dignity before internal weaknesses became apparent reflects a strategic calculation rather than a surrender.

Gandhi's leadership during the Non-Cooperation Movement reflected strategic considerations, moral dilemmas, and the challenging intricacies of mass movements. While criticisms persist, a nuanced evaluation acknowledges the complexity of factors influencing Gandhi's decision and recognises withdrawal as an inherent facet of a strategy rooted in the active participation of the masses. The Non-Cooperation Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, its broadening support base, and the communal harmony marked a significant period in India's struggle for independence.

Following the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, questions arose about its success, considering the unfulfilled promise of Swaraj within a year. Despite the unmet deadline, the Non-Cooperation Movement achieved considerable success. It shattered the perception of the Indian National Congress as a 'microscopic minority' and proved its substantial support across various social segments. The spatial reach of the movement was extensive, with activity evident in most regions.

The movement showed the hitherto underestimated capacity of the Indian masses to engage in nationalist politics. The 'poor dumb millions' demonstrated courage, sacrifice, and resilience against adversity and challenged the notion that the desire for national freedom was confined to the educated and affluent. For many, this marked their initial exposure to nationalist politics and the modern ideology of nationalism. While not all fully grasped its consequences, the attempt to bring the movement to the

masses signified a crucial shift. The first-contact weaknesses were acknowledged, but this was merely the beginning.

The extensive participation of Muslims in the movement shows its truly mass character. Communal unity prevailed despite isolated incidents like those in Malabar. Unfortunately, this harmony witnessed during the Non-Cooperation Movement diminished as communalism gained prominence in later years. The retreat ordered on February 12, 1922, marked the end of a battle but not the war. Gandhiji responded to challenges from British leaders with a resolute declaration that the fight initiated in 1920 was relentless. The withdrawal was temporary, and the movement would evolve to face new challenges with vigour and determination. The Non-Cooperation Movement, despite its apparent setbacks, laid a foundation for future struggles. It expanded the support base, demonstrated the potential of the masses in nationalist politics, and briefly fostered communal harmony. As Gandhiji asserted, the fight for India's independence was far from over, setting the stage for continued resistance against colonial rule.

## 2.2.5 Civil Disobedience

Gandhi identified the need for civil disobedience after the probationary period. This decision prompted him to cancel his European tour and prioritise his commitment to the forthcoming struggle. Gandhi had been actively preparing the people for the impending struggle through extensive travels across India. From Kathiawad to Assam, he traversed the nation and delivered a simple yet powerful message. The emphasis during these tours was on the constructive programme, including khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity, and the eradication of untouchability.

As the year 1929 approached, Gandhi shifted his focus towards preparing the masses for direct political action. In Sind,

he urged the youth to brace themselves for the upcoming challenges. The establishment of the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee was a move towards an aggressive boycott and public burning of foreign cloth. This incident symbolised a transition towards political activism. Gandhi personally initiated the campaign of burning foreign cloth in Calcutta in March 1929. His arrest warrants were issued, but he continued his scheduled tour to Burma. The arrest ignited a wave of bonfires across the country. Gandhi emphasised the importance of remaining within the law as much as possible while preparing for civil disobedience.

Gandhi's leadership and philosophy during this crucial period not only laid the groundwork for civil disobedience but also inspired a wave of mass movements. The Lahore Congress of 1929 authorised the Working Committee to plan a civil disobedience programme, including non-payment of taxes. By mid-February 1930, the Working Committee granted full powers to Gandhi to launch the movement. His ultimatum to Lord Irwin in January 1930 had been ignored, which left civil disobedience as the only viable path forward. Gandhi's formula for civil disobedience began to take shape in late February 1930, with a focus on salt as a symbol of resistance. He addressed the Viceroy and expressed why British rule was considered a curse and outlined his plan to break the salt laws. The meticulously planned Salt March from Ahmedabad to Dandi aimed to collect salt from the beach. This event marked a powerful act of defiance.

Before commencing the march, Gandhi, along with seventy-eight members of the Sabarmati Ashram, laid out the plan. He stressed the necessity for non-violence, instructed on disobedience of salt laws, picketing of liquor and foreign-cloth shops, tax refusal, lawyers giving up practice, and government servants resigning. The emphasis remained on adhering to the principles of



truth and non-violence. Gandhi explained the potency of civil disobedience and urged widespread participation. He envisioned a scenario where citizens from every village across India would manufacture salt and challenge the government's ability to suppress peaceful resistance. He emphasised how non-violence created a dilemma for the government. His peaceful action reflects the strength of the collective. On April 6, 1930, by picking up a handful of salt at Dandi, Gandhi inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement. The march and its symbolic act garnered widespread attention and marked a historic moment in the Indian national movement.



Fig.2.2.5 Gandhi during the Salt March,  
March 1930

Source credit : [mkgandhi.org](http://mkgandhi.org)

As Gandhiji marched to Dandi, Congress leaders and workers were diligently involved in organisational tasks. This included enrolling volunteers, establishing grassroots committees, collecting funds, and touring villages and towns to propagate the nationalist cause. The groundwork was essential for the impending launch of the salt Satyagraha. Following Gandhi's symbolic initiation at Dandi, the defiance of salt laws occurred across the country. In Tamil Nadu, C. Rajagopalachari led a salt march from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam, collecting enough volunteers to sustain the campaign. In Malabar, K. Kelappan walked from Calicut to Payannur to break the salt law. Similar acts of defiance occurred in Assam, Bengal,

and Andhra, with Satyagrahis setting up camps and marching through villages. The Government's failure to arrest Gandhiji for breaking the salt law became a powerful narrative at the local level. Leaders utilised this perceived fear of the government to instil confidence in the people, claiming that 'the Government is afraid of persons like ourselves' and asserting the establishment of a 'Gandhi Government.' Jawaharlal Nehru's arrest on April 14 triggered massive demonstrations and clashes in cities like Madras, Calcutta, and Karachi.

Salt Satyagraha not only challenged the British regime's benevolent facade but also became a symbol of non-violent resistance. The rapid expansion of the Salt Satyagraha left the British Government with limited options. As pressure built up from officials, Governors, and the military, the Viceroy, on May 4, ordered Gandhi's arrest. Despite the attempt to curb the movement's momentum, the timing of Gandhiji's arrest only served to intensify the activities. It caused additional challenges for the Government. Gandhiji's arrest triggered a massive wave of protests across India. In Bombay, a large crowd spilled into the streets, with textile and railway workers joining the ranks. Cloth merchants observed a six-day hartal, and clashes erupted in Calcutta and Delhi. However, the fiercest response occurred in Sholapur, Maharashtra, where textile workers, leading a strike, attacked symbols of government authority and established a parallel government that required martial law for resolution.

As the salt *Satyagraha* assumed a more potent form, Sarojini Naidu, Imam Saheb, and Gandhiji's son, Manilal, led a group of 2000 *Satyagrahis* towards the Dharasana salt works. In an unprecedented display of non-violent heroism, the *Satyagrahis* faced steel-tipped *lathis* without raising an arm in defence. This powerful demonstration, resulting in 320 injured and two dead, left

a lasting impact and garnered international attention. In Wadala, a suburb of Bombay, 15,000 people broke police cordons to triumphantly carry away salt. Similar mass actions occurred in Karnataka, Madras, Andhra, and Bengal, where village women walked miles to obtain salt. Balasore, Pune, and Cuttack in Orissa remained active centres of illegal salt manufacture. The movement's widespread impact and the adoption of Gandhian principles underscore the significance of Gandhi's philosophy in inspiring and mobilising the people in their pursuit of independence.



Fig. 2.2.6 Gandhi picking salt during Salt Satyagraha

The Salt *Satyagraha*, while a significant event, acted as a precursor to a multitude of acts of resistance. Gandhiji's arrest became a turning point, leading to the initiation of a variety of defiance strategies that went beyond the salt tax protest. Before his arrest, Gandhiji advocated for a vigorous boycott of foreign cloth and liquor shops. He specifically encouraged women to take a leading role in this movement, recognising their strength and purpose. This move aimed to address issues beyond the salt tax. It shows the holistic nature of Gandhi's approach to social change. Gandhiji challenged the stereotypes. He affirmed that labelling women

as the weaker sex is unjust. In 1930, women who had previously adhered to strict customs, including those in *purdah*, emerged as a formidable force. They stood outside liquor shops, opium dens, and stores selling foreign cloth. They engaged in quiet but impactful persuasion to change consumer behaviour and convince shopkeepers to reconsider their practices. The movement became a testament to the enduring strength and resolve of the Indian people under Gandhian guidance.

## 2.2.6 Civil Disobedience - Phase II (1930-31)

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31 stands as a crucial chapter in India's anti-imperialist struggle. The Civil Disobedience Movement witnessed an unprecedented surge in participation, with over 90,000 individuals incarcerated—three times more than the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22. The movement significantly impacted British imports, particularly cloth and cigarettes, while government revenue from liquor excise and land revenue suffered. Legislative Assembly elections faced effective boycotts. Merchants, shopkeepers, and students played active roles in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and cities overall. Peasants took centre stage in Gujarat, U.P., Bengal, Andhra, and Bihar, while tribals engaged in the struggle in the Central Provinces, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Bengal. Workers actively participated in mass demonstrations in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and notably in Sholapur.

Although Muslim participation did not match the levels of 1920-22 due to communal leaders' appeals and government encouragement of communal dissension. Overwhelming participation occurred in the North-West Frontier Province, while middle-class Muslims actively supported the movement in areas like Senhatta, Tripura, Gaibandha, Bogura, Noakhali, and Dacca. Muslim women and various



Muslim communities across Bihar, Delhi, and Lucknow also played important roles. The movement garnered support from the poor and illiterate segments, both in urban and rural settings. Their active involvement is reflected even in official jail records.

This highlights the movement's broad-based impact. Indian women, in particular, experienced unprecedented liberation and marked their significant entry into the public sphere.

## R Recap

- ◆ Agrarian issues of Indigo planters in Bihar
- ◆ Oppression and Consolidation
- ◆ Sporadic movement
- ◆ Entry of Gandhi as a mediator in Ahmedabad Mill strike
- ◆ Champaran, Ahmedabad, and Kheda movements and Gandhi's strategic leadership
- ◆ Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution emphasised dialogue and negotiation
- ◆ *Satyagrahas* and symbolism of resistance
- ◆ Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence method of struggle
- ◆ A nationwide *Satyagraha* after the tragic incidents at Jallianwala Bagh
- ◆ Rowlett *Satyagraha* after the tragic incident at Jallianwala Bagh.
- ◆ *Khilafat* and non-Cooperation
- ◆ Chauri Chaura incident and withdrawal of non-cooperation movement
- ◆ Civil disobedience and Salt *satyagraha*
- ◆ Salt as a symbol of resistance
- ◆ Powerful act of defiance
- ◆ The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31



## Objective Questions

1. What was the reason behind the Champaran *Satyagraha*, led by Mahatma Gandhi?
2. What was the aim of the Rowlatt Act of 1919?
3. Which movement was initiated by Mahatma Gandhi to protest against the British imposition of taxes on Indian goods, particularly salt?
4. What was the primary goal of the Non-Cooperation Movement?
5. Who played a crucial role in the Non-Cooperation Movement alongside Gandhi?
6. What event led to the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement?
7. Which region stood out in the success of the educational boycott during the Non-Cooperation Movement?
8. What was the aim of the *Khilafat* Movement with which Mahatma Gandhi allied himself in the Indian independence struggle?
9. Which movement did Mahatma Gandhi launch in 1919 in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre?
10. Who was the British viceroy during Mahatma Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha in 1930?
11. Which movement advocated for the boycott of foreign goods and institutions as a means of protesting British rule in India?
12. Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, covering his early life in India, South Africa, and his non-violent activism, is titled?
13. What does the term 'Satyagraha' refer to?
14. What strategy did Gandhi use during the Civil Disobedience Movement to mobilise the masses?
15. Which event marked the end of the Civil Disobedience Movement?



# A

## Answers

1. Exploitation in the Indigo plantation system
2. Suppress political agitation in India
3. Salt Satyagraha
4. Complete independence from British rule
5. C.R. Das
6. Chauri Chaura incident
7. Bengal
8. To protect the Ottoman Caliphate and Muslim interests following World War I
9. To protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
10. Lord Irwin
11. Non-Cooperation Movement
12. 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth'
13. 'Satyagraha' means 'truth force' or 'soul force'
14. Non-violent protests and boycotts
15. The signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact

# A

## Assignments

1. Discuss Gandhi's strategic leadership in addressing local issues during the Champaran, Ahmedabad, and Kheda movements.
2. Analyse Gandhi's decision to withdraw from the Non-Cooperation Movement. Consider both strategic considerations and criticisms from within the Congress party.
3. Analyse the significance of the Salt Satyagraha in India's struggle for independence.
4. Discuss Gandhi's approach to preparing for civil disobedience. Examine his emphasis on disciplined adherence to non-violent principles and mass mobilisation of the Indian masses.



## S

## Suggested Reading

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## R

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## Unit 3

# Gandhi as a Mass Leader

## L

### Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ get familiarised with the emergence of Gandhi as a mass leader
- ◆ get an idea about his strategies for mobilising the masses towards a common cause
- ◆ comprehend the impact of his principles on social and political movements

## B

### Background

*"In the Punjab, we have 55,000 soldiers and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal, our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One-man Boundary Force.."-* From Lord Mountbatten's letter to Mahatma Gandhi (August 26, 1947)

India was on the brink of independence, amidst the chaos of riots and unrest. In the midst of this turmoil, to curb the communal violence and restore peace in Noakhali, Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, found only one solution. Realising the power of Gandhiji's presence alone to calm the storm and guide his people towards peace and unity, Mountbatten called upon one man, Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi had visited areas hit by communal riots at Noakhali in the then Bengal to restore peace instead of taking part in the celebrations in Delhi when India attained freedom in 1947. He did not visit the safe places but went and stayed in the areas where people affected by the violence had lived. Gandhi walked through the troubled streets of Noakhali, urging Hindus and Muslims to embrace harmony and brotherhood.

The above-mentioned letter shows the unparalleled influence and significance of Gandhi as a mass leader, whose principles of non-violence and *Satyagraha* resonate deeply with the masses. Gandhi's commitment to resolving conflicts through dialogue and non-violence served as a beacon of hope in a time of darkness.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, also known as 'Mahatma' (Great Soul), stood out from his contemporaries as a 'frail prophet of non-violence'. His influence was so powerful that it even led to the end of an empire where the sun never set. In an era in which modern communication technologies like television and radios did not exist, with a major portion of the population unable to read, Gandhi's ability to connect with people was unparalleled. Gandhi's strength lay in his knack for using simple gestures that could communicate with the souls of his fellow countrymen. Gandhi etched his name in the annals of history and stood as one of the most influential figures of the 20th century. In this unit, let us delve deeper into Gandhian leadership and his ability to mobilise the masses and hence be popular as a mass leader.

## K Keywords

Imprisonment, *Bapu*, *Mahatma*, Communalism, Partition, Riots, Leadership

## D Discussion

### 2.3.1 From 'Bapu' to 'Mahatma'

Mahatma Gandhi's journey as a leader began in South Africa, where he fought for the rights of Indians against racial discrimination. It was in South Africa that Gandhi first experimented with *Satyagraha*, a form of non-violent resistance that would later become synonymous with his name. Through peaceful protests and civil disobedience, he demonstrated the power of passive resistance in effecting social change. Through his strong commitment to non-violent resistance, he earned the respect

and admiration of people from all walks of life. Upon his return to India, Gandhi wasted no time in immersing himself in the country's freedom struggle. Gandhi continued his mission by taking leadership during movements like the Champaran, Ahmedabad, and Kheda struggles. All these movements demonstrated his ability to mobilise and unite the masses against injustice and oppression. From leading farmers in Champaran to organising mill workers in Ahmedabad, he tirelessly championed the cause of the oppressed, which earned him the title of *Mahatma*, or *Great Soul*. In March 1919, Gandhi issued a clarion call for *Satyagraha*,



a form of non-violent resistance, to protest against the draconian Rowlatt Act. This call to action reverberated across the nation, drawing countless individuals who were awoken to the cause of independence.

Mahatma Gandhi's remarkable evolution from being affectionately called "Bapu" to being revered as "Mahatma" reflects the significant changes he underwent, both personally and in his role as a leader. Growing up in a devout family in Gujarat, Gandhi was deeply influenced by the spiritual values instilled by his mother and the tales of truthfulness embodied by figures like Harishchandra. Early on, Gandhi's spiritual quest led him to explore the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu scripture advocating paths to spiritual enlightenment. Inspired by its principles of selfless service, devotion, meditation, and wisdom, Gandhi embraced a holistic approach to spirituality, integrating these teachings into his everyday life.

At the core of Gandhi's philosophy lay the principle of Ahimsa, or non-violence, which he saw not just as a passive resistance to injustice but as an active force for social change. He believed that true transformation could only come through a commitment to non-violence in all aspects of life. As Gandhi delved deeper into his spiritual journey, his advocacy for social justice grew stronger. He became a leading voice against oppression and discrimination, using non-violent resistance as a means to challenge injustice and inspire change. Through acts of civil disobedience and peaceful protests, Gandhi rallied the masses and ignited a movement for independence that transcended barriers of caste, religion, and culture.

The title of 'Mahatma,' meaning 'Great Soul,' was bestowed upon Gandhi by his followers, acknowledging his moral authority and spiritual leadership. It was a recognition of his unwavering commitment to truth,

non-violence, and social justice, which earned him the respect and admiration of millions worldwide. Despite facing numerous obstacles and setbacks, Gandhi remained resolute in his principles and stood firm in his pursuit of justice. His willingness to endure personal hardship for the greater good inspired countless others to join him in the struggle for freedom and equality. Gandhi's life demonstrates that through a strong commitment to truth, non-violence, and social justice, individuals can affect meaningful change in the world.

### 2.3.2 Gandhi's Trials and Imprisonments

Gandhiji's leadership during the Indian Independence movement is marked by his strategic approach to resistance against British colonial rule. The Non-Cooperation movement, initiated by Gandhi as a response to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Khilafat movement, was a significant phase in India's struggle for independence. However, when it turned violent at Chauri Chaura, where a police station was set ablaze and resulted in a number of casualties, Gandhi withdrew the movement in February 1922. Following the withdrawal, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested in March 1922. He was convicted and sentenced to six years of imprisonment for spreading disaffection against the Government.

In India's fight for freedom, Mahatma Gandhi's clashes with the British legal system and his time behind bars were critical moments of strength and belief. When Gandhi's protests against British rule led to his arrest, it wasn't just a legal move. It was a clash of ideas. Gandhi didn't harbour personal grudges against individual British officials. Instead, he saw his resistance as a stand against a system that oppressed his people. He firmly believed it was his duty to oppose such injustice.



Fig. 2.3.1 Gandhis imprisonment

Source : [mkgandhi.org](http://mkgandhi.org)

The British court faced a tough decision: to recognise Gandhi's cause as just and distance themselves from the oppressive regime or to uphold the status quo and punish him severely. Despite Gandhi's passionate defence, he was sentenced to six years in prison, showing the court's reluctance to confront the injustices of colonial rule head-on. But for Gandhi, prison wasn't punishment; it was a chance for reflection and spiritual growth. Locked away, he found solace in prayer, study, and spinning, a symbol of self-reliance and resistance. However, his time in prison was interrupted by illness, highlighting the toll his commitment took on his health. Gandhi's trials and imprisonments aren't mere stories of sacrifice; they're symbols of courage, conviction, and the power of non-violence. Meanwhile, Gandhi's arrest and imprisonment led to disintegration, disorganisation, and demoralisation among the Indian nationalists. The situation also made them question the efficacy of Gandhi's strategy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Some of them even began to seek alternative ways.

When Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison on February 5, 1924, India was at a critical juncture. Gandhi was troubled by the issues between different factions within the Congress. He recognised the urgency of putting aside personal differences and presenting a united front against colonial oppression. Upon his release, Gandhi faced

a fractured society torn by communal strife and political disillusionment. In response, he went on a fast to rekindle unity and moral awareness among his people. Through acts of reconciliation, Gandhi sought to mend the divisions that plagued Indian society.

As the government intensified its crackdown on civil liberties, Gandhi stood in solidarity with the Swarajists, understanding the importance of collective action in resisting oppressive measures. He knew that withdrawing from the councils would only weaken the Congress and strengthen the government. To demonstrate his support for unity, Gandhi 'surrendered' before the Swarajists and emphasised the need to stand together in the face of adversity. Gandhi's leadership was characterised by his commitment to collaboration, tolerance, and strategic compromise. By prioritising unity over discord, he ensured that Congress remained a strong and cohesive force in the fight for independence.

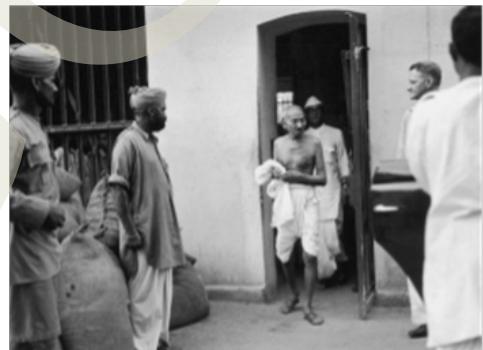


Fig.2.3.2 Mahatma Gandhi leaves the Presidency Jail in Culcutta

Returning to public life, Gandhi dedicated himself to social reform, advocating for Hindu-Muslim unity, the end of untouchability, women's empowerment, and economic self-sufficiency. His vision went beyond political freedom and aimed for the holistic liberation of Indian society. Gandhi's leadership rejuvenated the Indian National Congress, leading to the historic declaration of complete independence as the movement's ultimate goal. Initiating the Salt

March, Gandhi's peaceful protest captured the nation's imagination and inspired millions to challenge British authority. Negotiations with British officials, like the Gandhi-Irwin talks, show Gandhi's determination to confront colonialism with non-violence. Despite scepticism, Gandhi's commitment forced the British to acknowledge the moral imperative of Indian self-determination.

### 2.3.3 Leadership in Times of Communal Strife

After World War II, even though Britain emerged victorious, they became exhausted. British rule began to weaken in India due to famine and disorder. The 1945 general elections brought the Labour Party into power, with promises of self-government for India. Meanwhile, a Constituent Assembly was constituted to frame a constitution for a united India. However, attempts by the Cabinet Mission to arrive from England to discuss with Indian leaders on shaping a free and united India failed. It led to further divisions.

Meanwhile, on August 12, 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru was asked to form an interim government, but Muhammad Ali Jinnah's "Direct Action Day" in Bengal sparked violence across the country. Gandhi, deeply troubled by the bloodshed, decided to confront the situation by visiting the Noakhali district of East Bengal, where violence was unleashed against the Hindu minorities. Amidst this turmoil, Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a beacon of hope and resilience. Despite opposition from his Congress colleagues, realising the gravity of the situation, Gandhi visited the troubled areas of Noakhali.

The communal violence in Noakhali was a heavy blow to Gandhi's dream of a united India and his efforts for communal

harmony. Yet, Gandhi remained steadfast in his belief that peace could only be achieved through dialogue and understanding. Gandhi's presence in Noakhali was more than symbolic; it was a testament to his extraordinary leadership. He did not shy away from the grim realities of the situation but embraced them with courage and compassion. By personally interacting with both the victims and perpetrators of violence, Gandhi sought to bridge the gaping chasm of distrust and animosity. His actions spoke louder than words and inspired countless individuals to rise above their differences and embrace the path of non-violence.



Fig.2.3.3 Gandhi in Noakhali, 1946

Source credit : wikipedia

In the face of escalating violence, Gandhi saw his principles of non-violence being put to the ultimate trial. His decision to journey to Noakhali was not just a political move but a deeply personal quest to address the underlying causes of conflict in everyday life. Gandhi's perspective challenged conventional historical narratives. He prioritised love and truth over fear and aggression. Through his concept of Satyagraha, he introduced a new form of political engagement, rooted in soul force and the power of non-violence. Despite doubts and obstacles, Gandhi remained strong in his belief in the effectiveness of non-violence. He saw its success as both a scientific achievement and a moral imperative.



Fig.2.3.4 Gandhi speaking to  
Muslims in Noakhali  
Source : Photo Division, Govt.of India

However, Gandhi's journey in Noakhali was not without its internal struggles. He also grappled with the fear of failure and the weight of personal responsibility. Yet, he stayed true to his principles of truth and non-violence. He interacted with local leaders and authorities. Despite knowing the government's role in the riots, Gandhi advocated for trust and reconciliation rather than retaliation. Gandhi's journey in Noakhali shows his role as a mass leader.

Meanwhile, in Bihar, Hindus retaliated against Muslims. Gandhi was deeply saddened as Bihar was the place where he held his first Satyagraha in India. He urged villagers to seek forgiveness and make amends for past wrongs. Despite threats to his safety, Gandhi remained firm in his mission, declaring, "If ever you become mad again, you must destroy me first." His presence quelled violence and inspired communities to reconcile.

In May 1947, Gandhi was summoned to Delhi by the new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, who managed to persuade Congress leaders to accept Jinnah's demand for the partition of India as a condition for British withdrawal. As India approached partition, Gandhi adamantly opposed the idea of dividing India along religious lines, considering such divisions artificial. However, he couldn't sway the Congress leaders to his viewpoint.



Fig.2.3.5 Gandhi in 1947, with Louis Mountbatten and his wife Edwina Mountbatten

On August 15, 1947, India was officially partitioned and gained independence. Gandhi chose not to participate in the celebrations in the capital and instead went to Calcutta, where communal riots were still rampant. Then, on the day of independence, a significant event occurred: a riot that had been ongoing for a year suddenly ceased, and Hindus and Muslims began to reconcile. Gandhi spent the day fasting and praying, hoping for peace.

However, the communal violence resurfaced on August 31, putting Gandhi's safety at risk while he was staying in a Muslim household. The following day, he began a fast, vowing to end it only when sanity returned to Calcutta. His self-sacrifice once again worked wonders, as leaders from all communities pledged to end the violence. Gandhi ended his fast, and Calcutta upheld its promise despite the violence plaguing many other cities in the aftermath of Partition.

Despite Gandhi's efforts, his non-violent approach struggled to reconcile the inherent contradictions within the nation, particularly during some of the worst instances of violence in modern history. Gandhi's inability to prevent the violence that led to Partition serves as a sobering reminder that certain failures, though painful, are crucial for upholding the principles of civilised society over the violent and unethical birth of nations. However, Gandhi's leadership during these



turbulent times serves as a timeless example of sacrifice and dedication to the greater good. His legacy continues to inspire generations, reminding us of the power of love, courage, and non-violence in overcoming hurdles and bringing harmony to society.

### 2.3.4 Reflections on Gandhi

*“Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”* - Albert Einstein on Gandhi

Gandhi's commitment to non-violence, morality and justice continued to inspire contemporary thinkers and activists during his time. Let us have a look at the opinions of some of his contemporaries.

While he was addressing the residents of Gandhi's Ashram, Rabindranath Tagore shared his ideas about the profound concept of sacrifice and its connection to the quest for immortality. He also provided a heartfelt reflection on Gandhi. Tagore interpreted the term "Mahatma," often associated with Gandhi, as representing a liberated soul that recognises its inherent connection with all beings. He delved into the philosophical side of this concept by drawing from ancient scriptures to elucidate the idea of the Universal Soul within every individual. He considered Gandhi as an exemplar of the Mahatma ideal, whose life embodied the highest principles of selflessness and service to humanity. For Tagore, Gandhi emerged as not just a political leader but as a spiritual luminary whose legacy continues to inspire generations.

The relationship between Mahatma Gandhi and Winston Churchill during India's struggle for independence shows an interplay of personalities and ideologies. Despite their stark differences in beliefs, there were moments of both admiration and regret in Churchill's interactions with Gandhi. Churchill begrudgingly acknowledged

Gandhi's advocacy for the untouchables and recognised the moral integrity and social activism behind Gandhi's actions. Accounts from those close to them, like Mirabehn, reflect Churchill's evolving perception of Gandhi's practical idealism. These anecdotes reveal Churchill's willingness to engage with Gandhi's principles on a pragmatic level.

Gandhi, in response to Churchill's criticisms, remained firm in his belief in the transformative power of truth and non-violence. His poignant rebuttals to Churchill's doubts show Gandhi's conviction in his methods. However, Churchill's failure to fully acknowledge Gandhi's role in India's independence represents a missed opportunity for reconciliation and mutual understanding between the two figures of their time.

In his contemplation of Gandhi's life and principles, Nelson Mandela, a most important figure in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, draws parallels between their respective struggles against colonial oppression while also acknowledging the evolution of their tactics and ideologies. He highlighted Gandhi's role as an 'archetypal anti-colonial revolutionary' whose strategies of non-cooperation and non-violent resistance inspired movements around the world. Mandela held a deep respect for Gandhi's principles and their impact on the African continent. He acknowledged the significant influence of Gandhian non-violence on freedom struggles across Africa. He noted its ability to generate power and unity among the oppressed.

Mandela's admiration for Gandhi's bold commitment to non-violence is evident, even as he reflected on the necessity of armed struggle in certain contexts. He recognised Gandhi as more than just a political leader but as a spiritual guide who dared to exhort non-violence in a world ravaged by violence. Gandhi's advocacy for swadeshi, or the use of local goods, resonates with Mandela's vision

of empowering marginalised communities through economic autonomy. Mandela recognises the relevance of Gandhi's ideas in addressing contemporary issues such as global poverty and economic injustice. He acknowledged Gandhi's role as a pioneer in challenging dominant ideologies and revitalising indigenous intellect and spirit.

Albert Einstein, the renowned physicist, in a 1931 letter to Mahatma Gandhi, expressed his admiration for Gandhi's non-violent approach to social and political change. Einstein appreciated Gandhi's ability to

achieve success without resorting to violence, a sentiment that resonated deeply with Einstein's own innate aversion to cruelty and hatred. Throughout their correspondence and interactions, Einstein continued to hold Gandhi's views in high regard, considering them among the most enlightened of their time. In a 1950 audio clip, Einstein reiterated his admiration for Gandhi, stating that Gandhi's principles should guide our actions, advocating for non-violent resistance and a commitment to truth. Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha*, or devotion to truth, appealed to Einstein's sense of moral integrity and his belief in the power of principled action.

## R Recap

- ◆ Gandhi's Early Years and Leadership in South Africa
- ◆ Fight against racial discrimination and pioneered *Satyagraha*
- ◆ Evolution of Gandhi's Philosophy
- ◆ Influence of spiritual values, particularly the principles of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and truth
- ◆ Advocacy for self-transformation
- ◆ Trials and Imprisonments
- ◆ Gandhi's leadership during the Indian Independence movement
- ◆ Strategic resistance against British colonial rule
- ◆ Emergence of Gandhi as a beacon of hope during communal strife
- ◆ Advocacy for peace and reconciliation during partition
- ◆ Reflections of contemporary figures like Tagore, Churchill, Mandela, and Einstein





## Objective Questions

1. Where was Gandhi when India gained independence?
2. What form of resistance did Gandhi first experiment with in South Africa?
3. What principles lie at the core of Gandhi's philosophy?
4. What event led to Gandhi's arrest in 1922?
5. Which Viceroy asked for Gandhi's visit to Noakhali during communal violence?
6. When did Gandhi withdraw from the Non-Cooperation movement?
7. Which event unleashed communal violence in Noakhali?
8. What did Tagore interpret the term 'Mahatma' to represent?
9. Who was the last Viceroy of British India?
10. Where did Gandhi hold his first Satyagraha in India?
11. Who said this: "If ever you become mad again, you must destroy me first?"
12. Who called for 'Direct Action Day'?
13. When was India officially partitioned?
14. Why was the Constituent Assembly constituted?
15. Who commented on Gandhi that "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth"?



## Answers

1. Noakhali
2. *Satyagraha*
3. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and truth
4. The Chauri Chaura incident during the Non-Cooperation movement
5. Lord Mountbatten
6. February 1922
7. Jinnah's call for 'Direct Action Day'
8. A liberated soul that recognises its inherent connection with all beings
9. Mountbatten

10. Bihar
11. Mahatma Gandhi
12. Muhammad Ali Jinnah
13. August 15, 1947
14. To frame a constitution for a united India
15. Albert Einstein



## Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of Gandhi's leadership during times of communal strife, based on his actions in Noakhali and Bihar. How did his approach embody his principles of non-violence and reconciliation?
2. Explain the opinions of contemporary figures like Tagore, Nelson Mandela, and Albert Einstein on Gandhi.
3. Analyse the challenges Gandhi faced during India's struggle for independence, particularly his clashes with the British and the Congress. How did Gandhi mitigate these challenges while remaining firm in his commitment to non-violence and social justice?



## Suggested Reading

1. Bhattacharya, Buddhadeva. *Evolution of the Political Philosophy of Gandhi*. Calcutta: Calcutta Book House, 1969.
2. Chandra, B. *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*. Penguin Books, 1989.
3. Fischer, Louis. *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. Harper Collins, 2006.
4. Gandhi, M.K. *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2001.
5. Gandhi, Mahatma. Louis Fischer (ed.). *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work, and Ideas*. Vintage Publisher, 1962.



# R

## Reference

1. Chandra, B. *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*. Penguin Books, 1989.
2. Gandhi, M.K. *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2001.
3. Gandhi, Mahatma. Louis Fischer (ed.). *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work, and Ideas*. Vintage Publisher, 1962.

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# SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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## FYUGP THIRD SEMESTER EXAMINATION

### VALUE ADDED COURSE

#### COURSE : SGB24HS101VC - MAHATMA GANDHI

2025 - 2026 Admission Onwards

#### MODEL QUESTION PAPER (SET- A)

Time: 1 Hour

Max Marks: 23

### SECTION A

**Answer any five questions in a word or sentence. Each question carries one mark  
( $5 \times 1 = 5$  Marks)**

1. What was the name of Gandhi's autobiography?
2. Name any two regions where Gandhi organised peasant movements in protest against the colonial administration's policies.
3. When did Gandhi return to India from South Africa?
4. Who greatly influenced young Gandhi with religious stories and moral tales?
5. What does the term 'Ahimsa' mean in Gandhian philosophy?
6. What is meant by 'Satyagraha'?
7. Which movement led by Gandhi against the Rowlatt Act?
8. Who gave Gandhi the title 'Mahatma'?

### SECTION B

**Answer any four questions in two or three sentences each. Each question carries two marks.**

**( $4 \times 2 = 8$  Marks)**

9. How did Gandhi's early education influence his character?
10. Why is Champaran considered a turning point in Gandhi's leadership?



11. Mention any two Western thinkers who influenced Gandhi.
12. How did Gandhi perceive civil disobedience as a form of protest?
13. Name any two popular movements led by Gandhi in India.
14. What was the significance of the Khilafat Movement for Gandhi?

### **SECTION C**

**Answer any two questions. Each question carries five marks.**

**$(2 \times 5 = 10 \text{ Marks})$**

15. Explain the influence of ancient Indian thought and Western liberalism on Gandhiji.
16. Discuss Gandhi's experiences in South Africa and how they shaped his philosophy.
17. Evaluate the role of Gandhi as a mass leader in the Indian National Movement.





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2025-2026 Admission Onwards

#### MODEL QUESTION PAPER (SET- B)

Time: 1 Hour

Max Marks: 23

### SECTION A

**Answer any five questions in a word or sentence. Each question carries one mark  
( $5 \times 1 = 5$  Marks)**

1. In which year did Gandhi travel to South Africa for the first time?
2. Which commodity did Gandhi use as a symbol in his 1930 protest against British rule?
3. Which ancient Indian concept influenced Gandhi's idea of non-violence?
4. Who edited *The Essential Gandhi*, a collection of Gandhi's writings?
5. What was the immediate reason for Gandhi's first imprisonment in India?
6. When was the Non-Cooperation Movement officially launched?
7. Name the movement that protested against the Rowlatt Act.
8. Name a book written by Mahatma Gandhi.

### SECTION B

**Answer any four questions in two or three sentences each. Each question carries two marks.**

**( $4 \times 2 = 8$  Marks)**

9. How did Gandhi's childhood in Porbandar and his family surroundings influence his early values?
10. What was the impact of Western education on Gandhi's worldview?



11. What was Gandhi's contribution to the Ahmedabad Mill Strike?
12. Describe Gandhi's concept of Non-violence ('Ahimsa').
13. What is meant by 'Satyagraha'?
14. Mention any two significant outcomes of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

### SECTION C

**Answer any two questions. Each question carries five marks.**

$(2 \times 5 = 10 \text{ Marks})$

15. Explain the genesis of 'Satyagraha' in South Africa and how it evolved into a global philosophy.
16. Explain the impact of the Rowlatt Satyagraha and how it shaped the national movement.
17. Evaluate Gandhi's leadership in uniting people across regions, religions, and communities.



## സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

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# Mahatma Gandhi

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