



Gandhian Movement

Early Life

- Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi was a lawyer, trained in Britain.
- He went to South Africa in 1893 and resided there for twenty-one years.
- The treatment of the Indians in South Africa by the British provoked his conscience.
- He decided to fight against the policy of racial discrimination of the South African Government. During the course of his struggle against the government he evolved the technique of *Satyagraha* (non-violent insistence for truth and justice).
- Gandhi succeeded in this struggle in South Africa.
- He returned to India in 1915.
- In 1916, he founded the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad to practice the ideas of truth and non-violence.

Satyagrahas

- His first experiment in *Satyagraha* began at **Champaran** in Bihar in 1917 when he inspired the peasants to struggle against the oppressive plantation system.
- He also organised a satyagraha to support the peasants of the **Kheda** districts of Gujarat. These peasants were not able to pay their revenue because of crop failure and epidemics.
- In **Ahmedabad**, he organized a movement amongst cotton mill workers.

Champaran

- The peasantry at Champaran was agitating against the European planters who forced them to cultivate indigo.
- There was a history of peasant unrest against planters in Champaran.
- Raj Kumar Shukla, one of the peasant leaders, went all the way to Lucknow to invite Gandhi.
- Gandhi instituted an open enquiry into the matter in 1917.
- The Champaran movement also got wider publicity with the government trying to restrict Gandhi's entry into that area and later letting him go there on threat of *satyagraha*.
- The outcome of the Champaran movement was that the *tinkathia* system, under which the farmers had to cultivate indigo in 3/20th of their holdings, was abolished.

Ahmedabad

- The dispute between the workers and the owners had occurred due to the withdrawal of the ‘plague bonus’.
- The owners withdrew the bonus after the epidemic had passed and the workers opposed the withdrawal because of the rising prices after the War.
- Gandhi persuaded the workers and owners to negotiate before a tribunal.
- The owners suddenly withdrew from the arbitration on the pretext of a strike called by some workers and declared that they were ready to give only 20% bonus and threatened dismissal to those workers who did not comply.
- Gandhi was greatly offended by this breach of agreement and declared that after proper study of the production cost, profits and the cost of living the conclusion was drawn that the workers were justified in asking for **35% increase in wages**.
- Ambalal Sarabhai, one of the mill owners was a close friend of Gandhi and had given a liberal donation to his ashram at Sabarmati, and his sister Anasuya Ben was one of his greatest supporters in the Ahmedabad mill workers struggle.
- During the last stages of this struggle Gandhi **for the first time used the fast as a means of protest**.
- Gandhi observed that the workers were slowly losing their morale so he decided to go on a fast.
- He declared that if the strike was to lead to starvation, then he should be the first to once more and the matter was resolved with the workers **getting the 35% raise**.

Kheda

- The Kheda peasants were unable to get a remission of land revenue from the government.
- First, enquiries were made into the situation, as was the norm of all Gandhian movements.
- Crop yields were studied and it was confirmed that it had been one third of the normal yield which made the peasants eligible for a total remission of revenue.
- Gandhi advised the peasants to withhold the revenue. Vallabhbhai Patel and Indulal Yajnik helped Gandhi in the Kheda district by organising his tour of the villages and urging the peasants to stand firm.
- At that very movement Gandhi learnt that the Government was contemplating a compromise by directing that the revenue be recovered from only those who could pay it.
- Gandhi had asked the well-off peasants also to withhold payment so that the poorer peasantry may not surrender.

Rowlatt *satyagraha*

- In February 1919, two bills that would severely curb the civil liberty of Indians were sought to be made into laws.
- The government wanted to pass these laws so that they may be able to control the rising tide of discontent among the population.
- The laws would provide for **arbitrary detention and punishment without trial** etc.
- In fact, one of the bills was passed in the Council and made into law in spite of protests from the elected Indian members.

- A ‘Satyagraha Sabha’ was formed that attracted many members.
- It was decided that a nationwide ‘hartal’ or strike would be observed to protest against the Act and fasting and prayers will be conducted.
- There would also be civil disobedience of certain laws. The Rowlatt Satyagraha was the **first nationwide protest** in India under the guidance of Gandhi.
- 6th April 1919 was decided as the day of hartal, however due to some confusion it was observed on 30th March in Delhi and led to fighting in the streets.
- Gandhi tried to go to Punjab and get the movement back on the track of non-violent *satyagraha*.
- However Gandhi was prevented from entering the Punjab by the British government and was deported to Bombay.
- Bombay and Ahmedabad were also experiencing disturbances at that time and Gandhi tried to control the movement there.

Jalianwalla Bagh

- On the 13th of April 1919 a Baisakhi day gathering at Jalianwalla Bagh in Amritsar invited the wrath of General Dyer who was made in charge of the city.
- The General, angered that the ban on public meetings was being flouted attacked the unarmed and helpless gathering and had his men fire at the crowd for ten minutes and only stopped when his ammunition was spent.
- No prior warning was issued to the people before firing started and there was no escape other than the narrow pathway where Dyer's men stood with their guns as the Jallianwalla Bagh was enclosed by walls on all sides.
- This incident left 379 dead according to a conservative government estimate.
- This brutal incident was followed by even more brutal repression.

Khilafat Movement (1919-1920))

- It was a movement of Indian Muslims, led by Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, that demanded the following:
- The Turkish Sultan or Khalifa must retain control over the Muslim sacred places in the erstwhile Ottoman empire;
- the *jazirat-ul-Arab* (Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Palestine) must remain under Muslim sovereignty;
- The Khalifa must be left with sufficient territory to enable him to defend the Islamic faith.
- The Congress supported the movement and Mahatma Gandhi sought to conjoin it with the Non-cooperation Movement.

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22)

- he decided to launch a nationwide *satyagraha* against the proposed Rowlatt Act in 1919.
- He threatened to start the non-cooperation movement in case the government failed to accept his demands.
- Gandhiji wanted non violent civil disobedience against such unjust laws and he started his non-cooperation movement in August 1920, in which he appealed to the people not to cooperate with the British government.
- At this time, the Khilafat movement started by the Muslims
- Noncooperation movement led by Gandhi merged into one common confrontation against the British Government.

- (1) Surrender of titles and honorary offices as well as resignation from nominated seats in local bodies;
- (2) refusal to attend official and non-official functions;
- (3) gradual withdrawal of children from officially controlled schools and colleges;
- (4) gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants;
- (5) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia;
- (6) boycott of elections to the legislative council by candidates and voters;
- (7) boycott of foreign goods and nNational schools and colleges

- Later, it was supplemented with a constructive programme which had three principal features:

(1) promotion of ‘Swadeshi’, particularly hand-spinning and weaving;

(2) Removal of untouchability among Hindus;

(3) promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity.



- The non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement, which started auspiciously, was marked by violence in August, 1921.
- The government started taking serious action.
- Prominent leaders were arrested. In two months, nearly 30,000 people were imprisoned.
- The outbreak of violence cautioned Gandhi. Mob violence took place on February 9, 1922, at Chauri Chaura village, in Gorakhpur district of UP.
- This was followed by more violence at Bareilly.
- Gandhi suspended his noncooperation on February 14, 1922.
- He was arrested at Ahmadabad on March 18, 1922, and sentenced to six years simple imprisonment.
- The non-cooperation movement failed to achieve success, yet it succeeded to prepare a platform for the future movements.
- After taking back the Non-Cooperation movement, Gandhiji and his followers were busy in creative activities in village areas.
- By this he gave the message to the people to remove the cast-based animosity.



Dandi March

- Around the same time, the government made a new law. They imposed taxes on the use of salt.
- This was opposed by the people, as salt was the basic need of the people. But no attention was paid to demands of the people.
- During March-April, 1930, Gandhi marched from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi on the Gujarat coast for the purpose of raiding the Government Salt.
- The violation of salt law was his first challenge to the government.
- It was a peaceful march. Gandhi committed a technical breach of the Salt Law on 6th April, 1930, when he picked up the scattered sea salt from the coast to break the Law.
- In this movement farmers, traders and women took part in large numbers.

- The government arrested him in May 1930 and put him in Yervada jail at Poona. The campaign had a significant effect on British attitude toward Indian independence.
- Gandhiji also went to London in 1931 and participated in the second-round table conference as the sole representative of the Congress but no settlement could be arrived at.
- Although, Gandhi's arrest removed him from the active leadership of the movement, this civil disobedience continued.
- Special stress was laid on boycott of foreign goods particularly clothes.

- The Civil Disobedience Movement, though a failure, was a vital phase in the struggle for the freedom.
- It promoted unity among Indians of different regions under the Congress banner.
- It provided an opportunity to recruit younger people and educate them for positions of trust and responsibility in the organization as also in provincial administration, which was captured in the 1937 elections.
- It gave wide publicity to political ideas and methods throughout the country and generated political awareness even in remote villages.