

Time: 3 hrs  
Marks: 10 x 4 Qs = 40

Please respond to all the four questions. Each question carries ten marks and the break-up, where ever required, is given within parentheses. Please structure your answers with the skills you may have acquired while redacting your self-study assignment. You might want to use a page for ordering your thoughts and remember to keep an eye on the clock.

### Question 1

What do you understand by *satyagraha*? [2] Explain the role of individuals and Gandhi as well as the principles and processes followed by them during any of the three campaigns - Champaran Satyagraha / Ahmedabad Mill Strike / Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills- which were carried out before the break with the British empire in 1922. [8]

### Question 2

Gandhi in a letter to Gunottam Hutheesingh dated 05 Oct 1945 wrote that “the sum and substance of what I want to say [in the *Hind Swaraj*] is that the individual person should have control over things that are necessary for the sustenance of life.” This is one of the key thoughts in the *Hind Swaraj* but perhaps there are a few more that may have prompted a critical scholar of Gandhi to write thus “Read *Hind Swaraj* if you love the human family and this earth which is our home. Read it if you wish to do your little bit to halt man’s mad race towards self extinction [...] A mere 30,000 words: three hours of brisk reading, nothing more [...]” – TK Mahadevan, 1977, *Dvijia: A prophet unheard*.

Brisk reading may not however be apt for the *Hind Swaraj*, which argues against the cult of speed. Although brief, *Hind Swaraj* requires time for reading, thinking and discussing. From our class work together, identify what you consider to be the five weakest arguments of Gandhi in the *Hind Swaraj* and briefly explain why you think so. [10]

### Question 3

“Bapu was father to innumerable men and women and the guru of many. There were many to whom he ministered as doctor or even as nurse. He was a dear friend to many colleagues. Countless people looked up to him as their redeemer. All this is aptly included in the term “Father of the

nation". For me, however, he was mother. Generally, it is not possible for a man to become a mother to any one because he has not been endowed by God with a mother's loving heart. But Bapu appropriated for himself a share of even this divine gift. So Bapu mothered me. [...] To me, he often said: "Have I not become your mother? I have been a father to many but only to you I am mother? [...] Real education of a girl comes from her mother. If a girl does not know some household work, the mother-in-law or the sister-in-law rebukes her saying, "Your mother does not seem to have taught you anything. [But] no one finds fault with her father." Cited from Manubehn Gandhi, 2007, *Bapu-My mother*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan, p. 5.

You might want to pick clues from the passage given above towards elaborating an essay on how Gandhi feminized the political sphere by explaining the distinctions between sex and gender; the gendered nature of the political; and how Gandhi transcended division of sex and gender. [10]

#### Question 4

In 1936, Ambedkar was invited by the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal of Lahore to speak on the subject of caste. Ambedkar apparently insisted that this would be his last speech as a Hindu. The organizers of the event however believed that such a remark was irrelevant and asked him to expunge it from the transcript of the speech. When Ambedkar refused, the invitation was recalled and his speech remained undelivered. But the text of the speech was printed and published as *Annihilation of caste* (1936). The publication resulted in a response from Gandhi, who commented on Ambedkar's transcript. In his critique published in the *Harijan* (11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936), Gandhi wrote that Ambedkar was a challenge to Hinduism; that the many texts Ambedkar quoted from the *smritis* cannot be accepted as authentic; that the law of varna taught us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling; and that Ambedkar wrongly picked degraded Hindus as representative specimens of the religion. Dr. Ambedkar replied to this critique and extracts from that reply are given below. Please respond to the following questions from a reading of the extracts.

1. Why did Ambedkar say that there cannot be a good Hindu? [2]
2. "The dishonesty of this intellectual class, who would deny the masses the fruit of their thinking, is a most disgraceful phenomenon." With this remark, what is Ambedkar alluding to? [2]
3. On what grounds did Ambedkar critique the role of saints in society? [2]
4. Ambedkar equated the toleration of gods, goddesses and deities with insincerity rather than catholicity. Why? [2]

5. Could you mention two defining characteristics of the caste system? And, could you suggest two ways in which caste may be annihilated? The responses to these two questions may not be self-evident in the extract. [2]

The principal points which I have tried to make out in my speech may be catalogued as follows:

1. That Caste has ruined the Hindus; 2. That the reorganization of the Hindu Society on the basis of Chaturvarnya is impossible because the Varnavyavastha is like a leaky pot or like a man running at the nose. It is incapable of sustaining itself by its own virtue, and has an inherent tendency to degenerate into a Caste System unless there is a legal sanction behind it which can be enforced against everyone transgressing his Varna; 3. That the reorganization of the Hindu Society on the basis of Chaturvarnya would be harmful, because the effect of the Varnavyavastha would be to degrade the masses by denying them opportunity to acquire knowledge, and to emasculate them by denying them the right to be armed; 4. That the Hindu Society must be reorganized on a religious basis which would recognise the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; 5. That in order to achieve this object the sense of religious sanctity behind Caste and Varna must be destroyed; 6. That the sanctity of Caste and Varna can be destroyed only by discarding the divine authority of the Shastras.

It will be noticed that the questions raised by the Mahatma are absolutely beside the point, and show that the main argument of the speech was lost upon him.

**3** Let me examine the substance of the points made by the Mahatma. The first point made by the Mahatma is that the texts cited by me are not authentic. I confess I am no authority on this matter. But I should like to state that the texts cited by me are all taken from the writings of the late Mr. Tilak, who was a recognised authority on the Sanskrit language and on the Hindu Shastras. His second point is that these Shastras should be interpreted not by the learned but by the saints; and that as the saints have understood them, the Shastras do not support Caste and Untouchability. As regards the first point, what I would like to ask the Mahatma is, what does it avail to anyone if the texts are interpolations, and if they have been differently interpreted by the saints? The masses do not make any distinction between texts which are genuine and texts which are interpolations. The masses do not know what the texts are. They are too illiterate to know the contents of the Shastras. They have believed what they have been told, and what they have been told is that the Shastras do enjoin as a religious duty the observance of Caste and Untouchability.

With regard to the saints, one must admit that howsoever different and elevating their teachings may have been as compared to those of the merely learned, they have been lamentably ineffective. They have been ineffective for two reasons. Firstly, none of the saints ever attacked the Caste System. On the contrary—they were staunch believers in the System of Castes. Most of them lived and died as members of the castes to which they respectively belonged. [...]

The saints have never, according to my study, carried on a campaign against Caste and Untouchability. They were not concerned with the struggle between men. They were concerned with the relation between man and God. They did not preach that all men were equal. They preached that all men were equal in the eyes of God—a very different and a very innocuous proposition, which nobody can find difficult to preach or dangerous to believe in. The second reason why the teachings of the saints proved ineffective was because the masses have been taught that a saint might break Caste, but the common man must not. A saint therefore never became an example to follow. He always remained a pious man to be honoured. That the masses have remained staunch believers in Caste and Untouchability shows that the pious lives and noble sermons of the saints have had no effect on their life and conduct, as against the teachings of the Shastras. Thus it can be a matter of no consolation that there were saints, or that there is a Mahatma who understands the Shastras differently from the learned few or ignorant many. That the masses hold a different view of the Shastras is a fact which should and must be reckoned with. How that is to be dealt with, except by denouncing the authority of the Shastras which continue to govern their conduct, is a question which the Mahatma has not considered. But whatever the plan the Mahatma puts forth as an effective means to free the masses from the teachings of the Shastras, he must accept that the pious life led by one good Samaritan may be very elevating to himself, but in India, with the attitude the common man has to saints and to Mahatmas—to honour but not to follow—one cannot make much out of it.

4 The third point made by the Mahatma is that a religion professed by Chaitanya, Jnyandeo, Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar, Ramkrishna Paramahansa, etc., cannot be devoid of merit as is made out by me, and that a religion has to be judged not by its worst specimens but by the best it might have produced. I agree with every word of this statement. But I do not quite understand what the Mahatma wishes to prove thereby. That religion should be judged not by its worst specimens but by its best is true enough, but does it dispose of the matter? I say it does not. [...]

5 [...] Can personal character make the maker of armaments a good man, i.e., a man who will sell shells that will not burst and gas that will not poison? If it cannot, how can you accept personal character [as sufficient] to make a man loaded with the consciousness of Caste a good man, i.e., a man who would treat his fellow-men as his friends and equals? To be true to himself, he must deal with his fellow-man either as a superior or inferior, according as the case may be; at any rate, differently from his own caste-fellows. He can never be expected to deal with his fellow-men as his kinsmen and equals. fellow-men as his kinsmen and equals.

As a matter of fact, a Hindu does treat all those who are not of his caste as though they were aliens, who could be discriminated against with impunity, and against whom any fraud or trick may be practised without shame. This is to say that there can be a better or a worse Hindu. But a good Hindu there cannot be. This is so not because there is anything wrong with his personal character. In fact what is wrong is the entire basis of his relationship to his fellows. The best of men cannot be moral if the basis of relationship between them and their fellows is fundamentally a wrong relationship. To a slave, his master may be better or worse. But there cannot be a good master. A good man cannot be a master, and a master cannot be a good man. [...]

**6** Does the Mahatma practise what he preaches? One does not like to make personal reference in an argument which is general in its application. But when one preaches a doctrine and holds it as a dogma, there is a curiosity to know how far he practises what he preaches. It may be that his failure to practise is due to the ideal being too high to be attainable; it may be that his failure to practise is due to the innate hypocrisy of the man. In any case he exposes his conduct to examination, and I must not be blamed if I ask, how far has the Mahatma attempted to realize his ideal in his own case?

The Mahatma is a Bania by birth. His ancestors had abandoned trading in favour of ministership, which is a calling of the Brahmins. In his own life, before he became a Mahatma, when the occasion came for him to choose his career he preferred law to [a merchant's] scales. On abandoning law, he became half saint and half politician. He has never touched trading, which is his ancestral calling.

His youngest son—I take one who is a faithful follower of his father—was born a Vaishya, has married a Brahmin's daughter, and has chosen to serve a newspaper magnate. The Mahatma is not known to have condemned him for not following his ancestral calling. [...]

When can a calling be deemed to have become an ancestral calling, so as to make it binding on a man? Must a man follow his ancestral calling even if it does not suit his capacities, even when it has ceased to be profitable? Must a man live by his ancestral calling even if he finds it to be immoral? If everyone must pursue his ancestral calling, then it must follow that a man must continue to be a pimp because his grandfather was a pimp, and a woman must continue to be a prostitute because her grandmother was a prostitute. Is the Mahatma prepared to accept the logical conclusion of his doctrine? To me his ideal of following one's ancestral calling is not only an impossible and impractical ideal, but it is also morally an indefensible ideal. [...]

**7** The Mahatma sees great virtue in a Brahmin remaining a Brahmin all his life. Leaving aside the fact there are many Brahmins who do not like to remain Brahmins all their lives, what can we say about those Brahmins who have clung to their ancestral calling of priesthood? Do they do so from any faith in the virtue of the principle of ancestral calling, or do they do so from motives of filthy lucre? The Mahatma does not seem to concern himself with such queries. He is satisfied that these are "real Brahmins who are living on alms freely given to them, and giving freely what they have of spiritual treasures." This is how a hereditary Brahmin priest appears to the Mahatma—a carrier of spiritual treasures. treasures.

But another portrait of the hereditary Brahmin can also be drawn. A Brahmin can be a priest to Vishnu—the God of Love. He can be a priest to Shankar—the God of Destruction. He can be a priest at Buddha Gaya worshipping Buddha—the greatest teacher of mankind, who taught the noblest doctrine of Love. He also can be a priest to Kali, the Goddess, who must have a daily sacrifice of an animal to satisfy her thirst for blood. He will be a priest of the temple of Rama—the Kshatriya God! He will also be a priest of the Temple of Parshuram, the God who took on an Avatar to destroy the Kshatriyas! He can be a priest to Bramha, the Creator of the world. He can be a priest to a Pir, whose God Allah will not brook the claim of Bramha to share his spiritual dominion over the world! No one can say that this is a picture which is not true to life.

If this is a true picture, one does not know what to say of this capacity to bear loyalties to Gods and Goddesses whose attributes are so antagonistic that no honest man can be a devotee to all of them. The Hindus rely upon this extraordinary phenomenon as evidence of the greatest virtue of

their religion—namely, its catholicity, its spirit of toleration. As against this facile view, it can be urged that what is [described as] toleration and catholicity may be really nothing more creditable than indifference or flaccid latitudinarianism. These two attitudes are hard to distinguish in their outer seeming. But they are so vitally unlike in their real quality that no one who examines them closely can mistake one for the other.

That a man is ready to render homage to many Gods and Goddesses may be cited as evidence of his tolerant spirit. But can it not also be evidence of an insincerity born of a desire to serve the times? I am sure that this toleration is merely insincerity. If this view is well founded, one may ask what spiritual treasure can there be within a person who is ready to be a priest and a devotee to any deity which it serves his purpose to worship and to adore? Not only must such a person be deemed to be bankrupt of all spiritual treasures, but for him to practice so elevating a profession as that of a priest simply because it is ancestral—without faith, without belief, merely as a mechanical process handed down from father to son—is not a conservation of virtue; it is really the prostitution of a noble profession which is no other than the service of religion. [...]

9 Some might think that the Mahatma has made much progress, inasmuch as he now only believes in Varna and does not believe in Caste. It is true that there was a time when the Mahatma was a full-blooded and a blue-blooded Sanatani Hindu. He believed in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures; and therefore, in Avatars and rebirth. He believed in Caste, and defended it with the vigour of the orthodox. He condemned the cry for inter-dining, inter-drinking, and inter-marrying, and argued that restraints about inter-dining to a great extent "helped the cultivation of will-power and the conservation of a certain social virtue."

It is good that he has repudiated this sanctimonious nonsense and admitted that Caste "is harmful both to spiritual and national growth," and maybe his son's marriage outside his caste has had something to do with this change of view. But has the Mahatma really progressed? What is the nature of the Varna for which the Mahatma stands? Is it the Vedic conception as commonly understood and preached by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and his followers, the Arya Samajists? The essence of the Vedic conception of Varna is the pursuit of a calling which is appropriate to one's natural aptitude. The essence of the Mahatma's conception of Varna is the pursuit of one's ancestral calling, irrespective of natural aptitude.

What is the difference between Caste and Varna, as understood by the Mahatma? I find none. As defined by the Mahatma, Varna becomes merely a different name for Caste, for the simple reason that it is the same in essence—namely, pursuit of [one's] ancestral calling. Far from making progress, the Mahatma has suffered retrogression. By putting this interpretation upon the Vedic conception of Varna, he has really made ridiculous what was sublime. While I reject the Vedic Varnavyavastha for reasons given in the speech, I must admit that the Vedic theory of Varna as interpreted by Swami Dayanand and some others is a sensible and an inoffensive thing. It did not admit birth as a determining factor in fixing the place of an individual in society. It only recognized worth.

The Mahatma's view of Varna not only makes nonsense of the Vedic Varna, but it makes it an abominable thing. Varna and Caste are two very different concepts. Varna is based on the principle of each according to his worth, while Caste is based on the principle of each according to his birth. The two are as distinct as chalk is from cheese. In fact there is an antithesis between the two. If the Mahatma believes, as he does, in everyone following his or her ancestral calling, then

most certainly he is advocating the Caste System, and in calling it the Varna System he is not only guilty of terminological inexactitude, but he is causing confusion worse confounded.

I am sure that all his confusion is due to the fact that the Mahatma has no definite and clear conception as to what is Varna and what is Caste, and as to the necessity of either for the conservation of Hinduism. [...]

10. [...] Now, I maintain that the standards I have applied to test Hindus and Hinduism are the most appropriate standards, and that I know of none that are better. The conclusion that every known religion would fail if tested by my standards may be true. But this fact should not give the Mahatma as the champion of Hindus and Hinduism a ground for comfort, any more than the existence of one madman should give comfort to another madman, or the existence of one criminal should give comfort to another criminal.

I would like to assure the Mahatma that it is not the mere failure of the Hindus and Hinduism which has produced in me the feelings of disgust and contempt with which I am charged [=filled]. I realize that the world is a very imperfect world, and anyone who wants to live in it must bear with its imperfections.

But while I am prepared to bear with the imperfections and shortcomings of the society in which I may be destined to labour, I feel I should not consent to live in a society which cherishes wrong ideals, or a society which, having right ideals, will not consent to bring its social life into conformity with those ideals. If I am disgusted with Hindus and Hinduism, it is because I am convinced that they cherish wrong ideals and live a wrong social life. My quarrel with Hindus and Hinduism is not over the imperfections of their social conduct. It is much more fundamental. It is over their ideals.

11 Hindu society seems to me to stand in need of a moral regeneration which it is dangerous to postpone. And the question is, who can determine and control this moral regeneration? Obviously, only those who have undergone an intellectual regeneration, and those who are honest enough to have the courage of their convictions born of intellectual emancipation. Judged by this standard, the Hindu leaders who count are, in my opinion, quite unfit for the task. It is impossible to say that they have undergone the preliminary intellectual regeneration. If they had undergone an intellectual regeneration, they would neither delude themselves in the simple way of the untaught multitude, nor would they take advantage of the primitive ignorance of others as one sees them doing.

Notwithstanding the crumbling state of Hindu society, these leaders will nevertheless unblushingly appeal to ideals of the past which have in every way ceased to have any connection with the present—ideals which, however suitable they might have been in the days of their origin, have now become a warning rather than a guide. They still have a mystic respect for the earlier forms which makes them disinclined—nay, opposed—to any examination of the foundations of their Society. The Hindu masses are of course incredibly heedless in the formation of their beliefs. But so are the Hindu leaders. And what is worse is that these Hindu leaders become filled with an illicit passion for their beliefs when anyone proposes to rob them of their [beliefs'] companionship.

The Mahatma is no exception. The Mahatma appears not to believe in thinking. He prefers to follow the saints. Like a conservative with his reverence for consecrated notions, he is afraid that if he once starts thinking, many ideals and institutions to which he clings will be doomed. One must

sympathize with him. For every act of independent thinking puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril.

But it is equally true that dependence on saints cannot lead us to know the truth. The saints are after all only human beings, and as Lord Balfour said, "the human mind is no more a truth-finding apparatus than the snout of a pig." Insofar as he [=the Mahatma] does think, to me he really appears to be prostituting his intelligence to find reasons for supporting this archaic social structure of the Hindus. He is the most influential apologist of it, and therefore the worst enemy of the Hindus.

Unlike the Mahatma, there are Hindu leaders who are not content merely to believe and follow. They dare to think, and act in accordance with the result of their thinking. But unfortunately they are either a dishonest lot, or an indifferent lot when it comes to the question of giving right guidance to the mass of the people. Almost every Brahmin has transgressed the rule of Caste. The number of Brahmins who sell shoes is far greater than those who practise priesthood. Not only have the Brahmins given up their ancestral calling of priesthood for trading, but they have entered trades which are prohibited to them by the Shastras. Yet how many Brahmins who break Caste every day will preach against Caste and against the Shastras?

For one honest Brahmin preaching against Caste and Shastras because his practical instinct and moral conscience cannot support a conviction in them, there are hundreds who break Caste and trample upon the Shastras every day, but who are the most fanatic upholders of the theory of Caste and the sanctity of the Shastras. Why this duplicity? Because they feel that if the masses are emancipated from the yoke of Caste, they would be a menace to the power and prestige of the Brahmins as a class. The dishonesty of this intellectual class, who would deny the masses the fruits of their [=the Brahmins'] thinking, is a most disgraceful phenomenon.

The Hindus, in the words of Matthew Arnold, are "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born." What are they to do? The Mahatma to whom they appeal for guidance does not believe in thinking, and can therefore give no guidance which can be said to stand the test of experience. The intellectual classes to whom the masses look for guidance are either too dishonest or too indifferent to educate them in the right direction. We are indeed witnesses to a great tragedy. In the face of this tragedy all one can do is to lament and say—such are thy Leaders, O Hindus!

**The pre-Comprehensive Exam total is uploaded and shared on Google Drive. Please notify the IC for errors, or if you believe that you indeed have genuine and/or substantial disagreements with the evaluation by 12 May '16.**