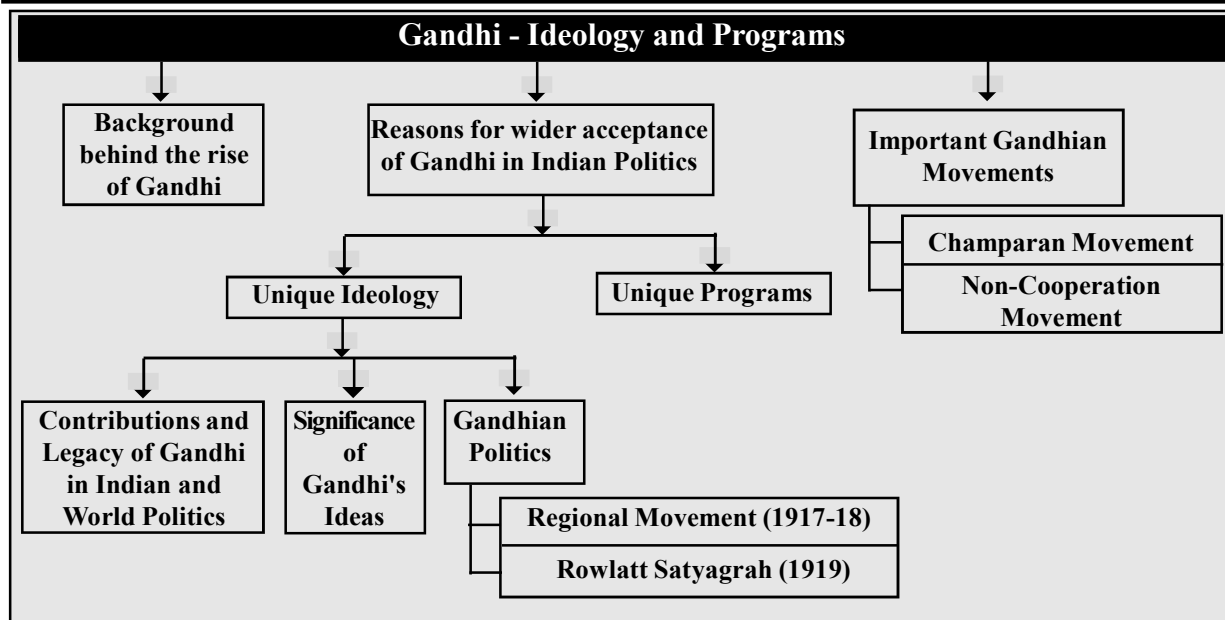


The Emergence of Gandhi



- Gandhi began his political career in South Africa. He arrived India in 1915, during the course of the First World War. Initially, he adopted the policy of co-operation with the British. He appealed to the masses to give their maximum support to the British government and join the Allied army in large numbers during the First World War. In fact, during the First World War, he gained widespread popularity due to his leadership in the movements like Champaran, Ahemdabad and Kheda. Then he participated in the first all India movement i.e. Rowlatt Satyagrah.

The Background for the emergence of Gandhi

- Upon the advent of Gandhi, there existed a political vacuum in India. In fact, the Moderate politics had already lost the confidence of the people, whereas the Extremist failed to organize the masses. Thus, Gandhi could easily fill this vacuum.
- Even before coming to India, Gandhi already enjoyed an international fame due to his role in South Africa. Moreover, he had already experimented with non-violence, methods of Satyagrah and constructive work programs in South Africa. Thus, the experience earned in South Africa helped him in India as well.
- The First World War had detrimental impact over different social groups of India.

The capitalist class was angered due to excessive taxation over industrial goods during the course of the First World War and laborers were distressed with the lay off in industrial sectors. Similarly, rich peasants were troubled with the falling prices of agricultural goods, whereas the lower class peasants were facing the crisis of starvation and frequent famines. Apart from that, the evil side of the West was revealed to young Indians for the first time during the course of the War. In fact, the use of chemical and biological weapons against humanity led to widespread disillusion with the west. Thus, the Gandhian Nationalism received the support of all the socio-economic classes in India.

- Infact, post war world was marked by mass upsurge which manifested itself in different forms- as socialist movements in Capitalist Western Europe and as nationalist uprising in colonies. So, the Gandhian nationalism was encouraged by the events occurring at the global level as well.

The causes for the success of Gandhi in Indian Politics

The Gandhian ideology

- Gandhi's ideology was remarkable in the sense that, it could easily attract the masses. It had the following important elements:

- **Satyagraha:** Gandhian Satyagraha was opposed to the use of brute force and it made a humanitarian appeal for reforms. In fact, it becomes difficult for the opponent to violently suppress such movements. Thus, it proved to be a successful political method of protest, which practically neutralized modern weapons.
- **Non-Violence:** The concept of Non-Violence has a great significance in the Indian society. Thus, Gandhi made it a political weapon against the British, which was unique in itself. In fact, for mass movements, it was necessary to stress on non-violent protests. Through this method, larger participation of the masses could be ensured in Gandhian politics. Even Women also participated in this movement. Moreover, Non-violent Satyagrah gave an assurance to the richer section that their interest would not be harmed. So, even they participated in Gandhian movements.
- **Swaraj:** Gandhian perception of Swaraj was unique in itself. While, for the Congress leaders, Swaraj simply implied political freedom, but for Gandhiji, it primarily implied moral freedom instead of political freedom. In this way, there was ambiguity in Gandhi's hypothesis of Swaraj, due to which it became even more relevant, because different classes interpreted it in their own way.
- **The criticism of Western civilization:** He criticized Western civilization. In his famous text 'Hind Swaraj', Gandhi declared that, India was not being trampled under the feet of the British, but it was being trampled under the feet of Western civilization. His criticism of modernism attracted those, who were left behind on the path of modernization in India.
- **The theory of Class Collaboration:** The Trusteeship Theory of Gandhi was propounded in the context of class collaboration. He emphasized that, the capitalists should work as 'trustees' of society and spend their additional income on welfare of the people. In fact, on the basis of this theory, Gandhi was able to create a

united front during the course of the national movement and integrated the efforts of capitalists, zamindars, laborers and peasants within the freedom struggle.

The Gandhian Programs:

- Unlike most of the Congress leaders, who used to dress in western attire, Gandhi adopted simple clothing of a common Indian peasant. Moreover, he used to travel in third class compartments in Trains and recited couplets from Ramayana, which easily attracted the masses in India.
- Gandhi through his rural constructive programs, including spinning Charkha, creating village panchayats, cleaning roads and organizing regular prabhatferis etc., integrated lakhs of villages of India with Congress politics.
- Gandhi was able to understand the pluralist character of Indian society and thus, planned his programs accordingly. In fact, Gandhi adopted mass based politics rather than specific class based politics.

Role of Rumors

- The rumors also played a great role in popularizing Gandhi, because masses always had an enlarged figure of Gandhi in mind. In fact, masses perceived Gandhi as a liberator, who would liberate them from excesses committed by exploitative groups.

The Contribution of Gandhi in the Indian National Movement and his Legacy

- Gandhi introduced an innovative approach in Indian politics i.e. the methods of Satyagrah and Non-violence.
- He started a politics based on religious morality. Before him, politics and religion were considered as two separate domains. The term 'religion' in this context implied 'faith in a particular moral system', instead of any extremist ideology.
- Before the arrival of Gandhi, the social base of the Congress was confined only to some specific sections of the society including Bhadrals of Bengal, Chitpawan Brahmans of Maharashtra and Tamil Brahmans of Madras. But after his arrival, social bases of

the Congress was much diversified and masses were integrated with the national struggle for independence.

- Under Gandhian leadership, the Indian National Movement also got associated with the contemporary social issues. Thus, nation building and social reforms progressed. He encouraged participation of women in the movement and launched a massive movement against untouchability.
- While criticizing Western civilization, he provided an alternative model of modernism. For instance, he promoted a sense of community as against individualism and gave emphasis over manual labor instead of mechanization.
- Even after Gandhi, his legacy continues to influence politics in India and the world. In India, Gandhi's legacy manifested itself in the form of Bhoodan movement, Chipko movement, Narmada Bachao movement etc. At the same time, the movements led by Martin Luther King in USA, Albert Luthuli in South Africa etc. also reflect the Gandhian legacy at global level.

Relevance of Gandhi in today's world

- Gandhi discarded violent methods and adopted non-violent means of protest. In fact, it can be a solution for one of the biggest threats of 21st century i.e. religious fundamentalism and terrorism.
- Gandhi advocated the idea of decentralization in administration. It can be considered as a solution for present day exploitative administrative machinery.
- Currently, the world is facing the problem of excessive mechanization. For instance, threats posed by artificial Intelligence to some highly skilled jobs. In such scenario, Gandhi's idea to promote manual labor over mechanization is highly relevant.
- The problem of over production has emerged as one of the biggest threats for modern civilization. Even problems like terrorism and environmental crisis are rooted in the problem of over production. Thus, some of the scholars consider Gandhi as a post-modernist thinker as his ideas gave

a hint about the future environmental problem. Environmentalists, from Vandana Shiva to Baba Amte have been inspired by the Gandhian philosophy.

Gandhian Politics

Regional Movement

- In the beginning, Gandhi became popular through his regional movements, like Champaran Satyagrah, Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918) and Kheda Satyagrah (1918)

Champaran Satyagrah, Ahmedabad Mill Strike and Kheda Satyagrah (1918)

- Gandhi organized his first movement in Champaran, Bihar. On the invitation of Rajkumar Shukla, Gandhiji reached Champaran and launched a movement against Tinkathiya System in that region. Under Tinkathiya System, peasants were expected to grow indigo in 3 parts (Kattha) for every 20 parts of their land. In the end, Gandhi was successful in ensuring the end of Tinkathiya system.
- In 1918, he started a movement in favor of workers in Ahmedabad textile mills. It was launched in response to the withdrawal of plague bonus by the mill owners- causing a furore amongst mill workers. Ambalal Sarabhai, a mill owner and friend to Gandhi, supported him in taking up the cause of mill workers to the tribunal. The tribunal ordered payment of 35 percent of the plague bonus. In this way, this movement also ended successfully for Gandhi.
- In 1918, he started a movement in Kheda district, Bihar. In fact, there was a situation of crop failure in Kheda. But, the government was not ready to implement the Famine Code, which had the provision of relief from payment of land revenue during the crisis. The members of Servants of India Society- Vitthal Bhai Patel and Gandhi, after a thorough research, concluded that the demand made by peasants was fair and thus, following the Famine Code, there must be a complete relief from payment of land-revenue.
- In this movement, the most significant role was played by the Gujarat Sabha, which was

presided over by Gandhi during the year of this movement. He even got the support of Indulal Yagnik. Gandhi received success in this movement as well.

There were the following benefit of these movements:

- Due to the success of these movements, Gandhi won the confidence of the masses. They could see positivity in his leadership that, he not only promised but fulfilled the aspirations of the masses.
- Most significantly, a generation of young leaders was moulded under the leadership of Gandhi. For example, during the course of movements in Bihar, Gandhi was supported by Shree Krishna Singh, Anugrah Narayan Singh, Bhulabhai Desai, Dr. Rajendra Prasad etc. Similarly, during the movements in Gujarat, he was supported by Vallabh Bhai Patel, Indulal Yagnik, Shankarlal Banker etc. for example, these local leaders later emerged as prominent figures in India's national movement.

Rowlatt Satyagrah:

- It was during the course of the Rowlatt Satyagrah that, Gandhi had emerged as an all India leader. In fact, in order to prevent any revolutionary activity in the future and to prepare a framework for legal reforms, Sedition Committee, under the chairmanship of Sidney Rowlatt, a judge of the British High court, was constituted on September 10, 1917. Based on its

recommendation, the Rowlatt Act was rammed through the Legislative Council, despite a nationwide unanimous opposition.

- Rowlatt Act was a draconian law, which contained a provision for arbitrary arrest without any warrant, as per the government's will. In fact, it propagated the slogan, "no vakil (lawyer), no daleel (argument), no appeal. In the hope of receiving self-rule after the end of the First World War, Gandhi had massively supported British in its war efforts. But, instead of self-rule, Indians were betrayed with the draconian Rowlatt Act.
- Thus, Gandhi decided to launch a nationwide movement against this Act. In this sequence, a Rowlatt Satyagrah Committee was constituted and Rowlatt movement started on April 6, 1919. Since, Punjab was still teeming with atrocities committed during the WW1, the movement was quite intense there. Then, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre took place on 13th April 1919. As a result, Gandhi called off the movement on 18th April 1919. However, it had the following positive outcomes-
 1. Though this movement continued for the next three years, but the British had no courage to make even a single arrest.
 2. The experience earned during the course of this nationwide movement benefitted Gandhi in the future.

