

Chapter 13

Mahatma Gandhi and the Nationalist Movement Civil Disobedience and Beyond

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar on 2nd October, 1869.
- Gandhiji left for South Africa as a barrister to argue a case in 1893.
- Gandhiji returned from South Africa in Jan, 1915.
- Gopal Krishna Gokhale- The political Guru of Mahatma Gandhi
- Peasant Movement in Bardoli-1928
- BHU stands for-Benaras Hindu University
- Khilafat Movement-1920
- Peasant Movement in Bardoli-1928
- Resolution of Poona Swaraj passed in Congress Session in Lahore on 26th Jan, 1930
- Civil Disobedience Movement begins- March-April 1930
- Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed- March 1931
- Second Round Table Conference held in London-Dee 1930
- Government of India Act promulgated -1935
- Provincial Government formed by Congress in some provinces-1937
- Second World War broke out- Sep 1939
- Congress Provincial Governments resign- 1939
- Quit India Movement begins- Aug 1942
- India becomes independent- 15th Aug 1947
- In 1905, Bengal, the biggest province of British India and included Bihar and some parts of Orissa, was partitioned by Viceroy Curzon. It enraged people all over India. Both the Moderates and the Radicals unitedly opposed the British action. This led to the birth of the Swadeshi Movement, which boycotted British institutions and goods.
- An important development came in 1906 with the formation of the All India Muslim League at Dacca. The founder members of the League were Muslim landlords and nawabs. They supported the partition of Bengal and demanded for separate electorates for Muslims.
- However, in the year 1916, the Congress and the Muslim League decided to work together for representative government in the country.
- The growth of mass nationalism began to take place after 1919. Peasants, tribals, students and women became involved in the struggle against the British rule.
- Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a mass leader. He, first of all, toured the entire country in order to understand the people, their needs and the overall situation.

- Afterwards, he led to local movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad in which he got immense success.
- In 1919 Gandhiji started Satyagraha Movement against the Rowlett Act that the British had just passed. The Act curbed fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression and strengthened the police powers.
- In April 1919, there were a number of demonstrations and hartals in the country against this Act. The government used hartal measures to suppress them. The Jallianwala Bagh atrocities in Amritsar on Baisakhi Day were a part of this suppression.
- In the year 1920, the British did another wrong known as khilafat movement. The British imposed a harsh treaty on the Turkish Sultan also known as Khalifa. This enraged Muslims and Khalifa agitation started under the leadership of Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. They wished to initiate a full-fledged Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhiji supported their call and urged the congress to campaign against Jallianwala massacre, and demand swaraj.
- During the years 1921-22, the Non-Cooperation Movement gained momentum because it got a wide support. However, it was abruptly called off by Mahatma Gandhi when on February 1922 a crowd of peasants set fire to a police station in Chauri Chaura. twenty two policemen were killed on that day. It hurt Mahatma Gandhi because he had never thought that people would go violent. He always wished to drive away the British by violent methods.
- The Congress now resolved to fight for Purna Swaraj (complete independence under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Now efforts began to be made in this direction. In 1930, Gandhiji started Dandi March against the Salt Law. He got immense support from the people.
- The combined struggles of the Indian people bore fruit when the Government of India Act of 1935 prescribed provincial autonomy and the government announced elections to the provincial legislatures in 1937.
- In September 1939, the Second World War broke out. The Congress leaders were ready to support the British war effort. But in return they wanted independence after the war. The British refused to concede the demand.
- A new phase of movement popularly known as Quit India Movement was initiated in August 1942 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. As a result prominent leaders were jailed at once. But the movement spread.
- In between these events the Muslim League began to demand independent states for Muslims in the north-western and eastern areas of the country. Mahatma Gandhi was not in favour of this.
- The League began to think that Muslims were a minority and they would always have to play second fiddle in any democratic structure. The Congress's rejection of the Leagues desire to form a joint Congress-League government in the United Provinces in 1937 further annoyed the League.
- In 1945, the British opened negotiations between the Congress, the League and themselves for the independence of India. The talks failed because the League then wanted Pakistan.

- In March 1946, the British cabinet sent a three-member mission to Delhi to examine the League's demand for Pakistan and to suggest a suitable political framework for a free India.
- The Mission suggested that India should remain united and constitute itself as a loose confederation with some autonomy for Muslim majority areas. Neither the Congress nor the League agreed to it. Now, partition of India became inevitable.
- Finally, Pakistan came into existence. The violence of partition shook both the newly- independent countries—India and Pakistan. It marred the joy of independence.

Beginning of Gandhian Era:

- Some times in the history of nationalism an individual with his contribution is identified with the making of a nation. Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as the father of Indian nation.
- Gandhi came back to India in January 1915 after leading successful struggle against discriminatory and oppressive policy of British in South Africa. For the first time, Gandhi started Satyagraha in South Africa (non-violent protest) and promoted harmony between different religious communities.
- When Gandhi came back to India, he realised that India become politically more active. Congress had made its reach to major towns and cities and Swadeshi Movement greatly broadened National Movements appeal among middle classes.
- Gandhiji's first major public appearance in India was at opening of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in 1916. During his speech, Gandhiji charged the Indian elite with a lack of concern for the labouring poor sections of our society.
- Gandhiji said "There can be no spirit of self-government if we take away or allow other to ' take away from the peasant almost the whole result of their labour."
- Gandhiji's speech at one level was a statement of the fact that Indian nationalism was an elite phenomenon in which lawyers, doctors and landlords were mostly involved. But he wanted that Indian National Movement should represent Indian people as a whole.

Gandhi as a People's Leader:

- Gandhiji made the freedom struggle and National Movement representative of masses. Movement transcended from elite to peasants, working class and encompassed every section of society. People started venerating Gandhiji referring to him as 'Mahatma'. People started appreciating the fact that Gandhiji lived like them, dressed like them, spoke their language, stand with them, empathise with them, and identified with them.

- Gandhiji went among the people in simple dhoti or loincloth. He spent some part of each day working on Charkha and encouraged other nationalist to do likewise. The act of spinning helped in breaking traditional caste system and distinction between mental labour and manual labour.
- Gandhiji appealed to peasants as saviour who can save them from oppressive taxes, officials and restore dignity and autonomy to their lives. Gandhiji ascetic lifestyle and love of working with hand, a deep empathy for poor and peasant won him followers irrespective of caste, creed and religion.
- A series of Praja Mandal were established to promote the nationalist creed in the princely states. Gandhiji stressed the use of mother tongue in communication, as the provincial Congress Committees were based on linguistic region. Many industrialists, entrepreneurs, businessmen started supporting Congress and Gandhiji.
- Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison in 1924 and now choose to devote his attention to the promotion of home spun khadi and the abolition of untouchability. He believed that India need to be free from evils of untouchability, child marriage, to cultivate a genuine tolerance for one another and religious harmony.
- He stressed the Indian's need to be self-reliant on the economic front, so he promoted Khadi and was against mill-made clothes.

Background of National Movements in India:

- In 1917, Gandhiji successfully led Champaran Movement. Through this movement he wanted to seek security of the peasants and their freedom to cultivate crop of their choice. In 1918, he led a strike demanding for better working conditions for the textile mill workers in Ahmedabad and other peasant movement asking the state for the remission of taxes in Kheda. During the First World War (1914-18), the British government instituted censorship of the press and permitted detention without trial. At the recommendation of Rowlatt Committee, these policies were continued. So in response to it Gandhiji called for nationwide campaign against Rowlatt Act and Bandh were observed.
- In Punjab opposition was quite intense, Gandhiji was detained while going to Punjab and many other local Congress leaders were also arrested. In April 1919, repressive policy took very ugly and tremendous turn when British Brigadier Dyer ordered his troops to fire on peaceful assembly at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. In this incident more than 400 people died. This shocked the nation and very deep resentment and anger was brewing inside Indians.
- It was the Rowlatt Satyagraha that made Gandhiji a true national leader. Emboldened by its success, Gandhiji called for campaign of non-cooperation with British rule. Indians were asked to renunciate all voluntary associations with British government. Gandhiji believed if non-cooperation was carried effectively, British would leave the country within a year.

Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement:

- To further strengthen the movement and unity among fellow Indians he joined hand with Khilafat Movement. Khilafat Movement was led by Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali and it demanded restoration of the respect of the Caliphate.
- According to Gandhiji by intermixing of Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movement, the two major religious communities i.e. Hindus and Muslims could collectively bring an end to colonial rule.
- Students refused to go to schools, colleges, lawyers stopped to going courts, working class went on strike, tribes in Andhra Pradesh violated forest laws and farmers in Awadh stopped paying taxes.
- American biographer of Mahatma Gandhiji, Louis Fisher wrote “Non-Cooperation became the name of an epoch in the life of India and Gandhiji. It was negative enough to be peaceful but positive enough to be effective. It entailed denial renunciation and self-discipline. It w’as training for self-rule.” Due to this movement British government was shaken.
- In February 1922, Gandhiji called off Non-Cooperation Movement due to untowards incident of burning of police stations in Chauri Chaura in which several constables were burnt to death.
- During the Non-Cooperation Movement, thousands of Indians were put in jail and Gandhiji was arrested in March in 1922, charged with sedition and awarded him six years of imprisonment.

The Salt Satyagraha:

- In year 1928, there was Anti-Simon Commission Movement in which Lala Lajpat Rai was brutally lathicharged and later he succumbed to it. In year 1928, another famous Bordoli Satyagraha took place. So again by the year 1928 political activism started brewing in India.
- In 1929, Congress session was held at Lahore and Nehru was elected as its President. In this session “Purna Swaraj” was proclaimed as motto, and on 26th January, 1930 Republic day was observed.

Dandi (Salt) March:

- After Republic day observance, Gandhiji announced his plan of march to break salt law. This law was widely disliked by Indians, as it gave state a monopoly in manufacture and sale of salt.
- On 12th March, 1930 Gandhiji began his march from ashram to ocean. He reached to shore and made a salt and thereby making himself criminal in sight

of law. Many parallel salt marches were undertaken during this time in other parts of the country.

- Movement was supported by peasants, working class, factory workers, lawyers and even Indian officials in British government supported it and
- left their jobs. Lawyer boycotted the courts, peasants stopped paying taxes and tribal broke forest laws. There were strikes in factories or mills.
- The government responded by detaining the dissenters or Satvagrahis. 60000 Indians were arrested and various high rank leaders of Congress including Gandhiji were arrested.
- An American magazine, 'Time', was initially doubtful on the strength of Gandhiji and wrote that Salt March would not be successful. But latter it wrote that this march made the British rulers 'desperately anxious'.
- These rulers were now started considering Gandhiji as a 'Saint' and 'Statesman', who was using Christian acts as a weapon against men with Christian beliefs.

Significance of Dandi March:

- Dandi March was very significant for at least three reasons:
 - It brought Mahatma Gandhi and India to attention of the world.
 - It was the first National Movement in which women participation was really very notable. Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, a socialist leader persuaded Gandhi not to restrict movement to men alone. Many women including Kamladevi broke salt and liquor laws and courted arrest.
 - Third and most significant was that this movement forced the British to realise that their Raj would not last forever and they need to devolve some power to Indians.
- In January, 1931 Gandhiji was released from jail and afterwards many meetings between Gandhi and Irwin took place and these meetings ended in a Gandhi-Irwin pact. Through this pact Civil Disobedience Movement would be called off, political prisoner will be released and salt manufacturers can make salt near coast. This pact was criticised by radical nationalist, as Gandhiji was unable to obtain commitment of political Independence for Indians.
- In later part of 1931, Gandhiji went to attend Second Round Table Conference as representative of Congress and he said his party represent all of India but his claim was countered by Muslim league, Princely states and BR
- So, this conference remained inconclusive. Gandhiji returned to India dejected and resume Civil Disobedience Movement.
- In 1935, a Government of India Act came and it promised some part of representative government. Two years later, elections were held and out of 11 provinces in 8 provinces Congress government were formed. However in 1939, Congress government resigned from office as British declined their offer of cooperation in the war in lieu of granting freedom to India after the end of war.

- In 1940 and 1941 Congress organised individual Satyagraha to pressure the government. In 1940, Muslim league passed the resolution demanding autonomy for the Muslim-majority areas of the subcontinent. Now, whole struggle became complicated and took a shape of three way struggle between British, Congress and Muslim league.
- In 1942, Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent a mission under Stafford Cripps to India to try and forge a compromise with Congress and Gandhiji. However, talks broke down when Congress offered, it will help the British to defend India from Axis powers. Then the viceroy had to appoint an Indian as the Defence member of his Executive Council.

Quit India Movement:

- After the failure of Cripps Mission, Gandhiji started Quit India Movement in August, 1948 from Bombay. Immediately, Gandhiji and other senior leaders were arrested, but younger activists organised strikes and acts of sabotage all over the country.
- Quit India Movement being a Mass Movement brought into its ambit hundreds of thousand of ordinary citizens and youths left their colleges and went to jail. During this time as Congress leaders were in jail, Jinnah and other Muslim league leaders worked patiently to extend its influence in Punjab and Sind where it had scarcely any presence.
- In June, 1944 Gandhiji was released from prison, later he held series of meeting with Jinnah to sort out the differences.
- In 1945, labour government came to power in England and committed itself to grant Independence to India. In India, Lord Wavell organised meetings with Congress and league. In elections of 1946, polarization was completely observed when Congress swept general category but seats reserved for Muslims. These seats were won by the Muslim League by overwhelming majority.
- In 1946, Cabinet Mission came but it failed in getting Congress and the Muslim League agreed on federal system which would have kept India united and autonomy would have been granted to provinces to a certain extent.
- After failing of talks Jinnah called for direct action day to press demand for Pakistan. On 16th August, 1946, riots broke out in Calcutta, later spread to other parts of Bengal, then to Bihar, United Provinces and Punjab. In riots both the communities suffered.
- In February 1947, Viceroy Lord Mountbatten replaced Wavell. He called for one last round of talk and when talks were inconclusive he announced India would be freed and it will be divided. Finally on 15th August, 1947, power was transferred to India.

The Last Heroic Days of Mahatma Gandhi:

- Gandhiji marked the day of Independence with a 24 hour fast. The freedom struggle ended with division of country and Hindus and Muslims seeking each others life.
- In the months of September and October Gandhiji went around hospitals and refugee camps giving consolation to people. He appealed to Sikhs, the Hindus and Muslims to forget the past and to extend the hand of friendship, cooperation and peace.
- At the backing of Gandhiji and Nehru, Congress passed resolution on the right of minorities. It further said party had never accepted partition but it has been forced on it.
- Congress said India will be a democratic secular country, every citizen will be equal. Congress tried to assure the minorities in India that their rights will be protected in India.
- On 26th January, 1948, Gandhiji said, earlier independence day was celebrated on this day, now freedom has come but it has been deeply disillusioning. He believed that worst is over. He allowed himself to hope that though geographically and politically India is divided into two, at heart we shall ever be friends and brothers helping and respecting one another and be one for the outside world.
- Gandhiji was shot dead by a Hindu extremist Nathuram Godse. Nathuram Godse was an editor of Hindu extremist, newspaper who had denounced Gandhiji as an appeaser of Muslims.
- Gandhiji's death led to extraordinary pouring of grief, tributes were paid across the political spectrum in India and appreciation coming from International figure such as George Orwell, Einstein, etc. Time magazine compared his death to Abraham Lincoln.

Knowing Mahatma Gandhi:

- There are different sources from which history of the National Movement and the political career of Gandhiji can be reconstructed.
- Writing and speeches of Mahatma Gandhi and his contemporaries were important source for knowing the events. Though there is a difference, speech were meant for public while private letter were meant to express emotions and thinking that cannot be expressed publicly.
- Many letters written to individuals were personal but they were also meant for the public. The language of letter was shaped by the awareness that it might be published, so it often prevent people from expressing their opinion freely.

- Autobiographies give us an account of past, but one need to be careful while reading and interpreting it. They are written on the basis of memory of author.
- Government records, official letters were also important source for knowing the history. But it also have limitations as these were mostly biased so it needs to be interpreted carefully.
- Newspapers in English and other Vernacular
- languages tracked Gandhiji's movement, National Movement and sentiment of Indians regarding freedom movement and Gandhiji. Newspaper should not be seen as unprejudiced as they were published by people who had their own political opinions and views.

Important Terms:

- Moderate: A person who is against taking extreme action.
- Repeal: To undo law.
- Radical: A person who welcomes new ideas or opinions.
- Revolutionary Violence: The use of violence to make a radical change within society.
- Council: An appointed or elected body of people with an administrative advisory or representative function.
- Knighthood: An honour granted by British crown for exceptional personal achievement or religious public service.
- Picket: A person or a group of people protesting outside a building or shop to prevent others from entering.
- Mahanta: Religious functionaries of Sikh gurudwaras.
- Illegal eviction: Forcible and unlawful throwing out of tenants from the land they rent.
- RSS: It stands for Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.
- Puma Swaraj: Complete independence.
- Provincial Autonomy: Capacity of the provinces to make relatively independent decisions while remaining within a federation.
- General Constituencies: Election districts with no reservations for any religious or other community.
- Refugee: One who has been forced to leave his country or home due to some political, or social reasons.

Time line:

- 1905 – Bengal got partitioned
- 1915 – Mahatma Gandhi came to India from South Africa.
- 1919 – The Rowlatt Satyagraha started. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre took place.
- 1920 – The Non-Cooperation Movement started.
- 1922 – Gandhiji called off the Non-Cooperation Movement.



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