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Mahathma Gandhi

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Why in News?

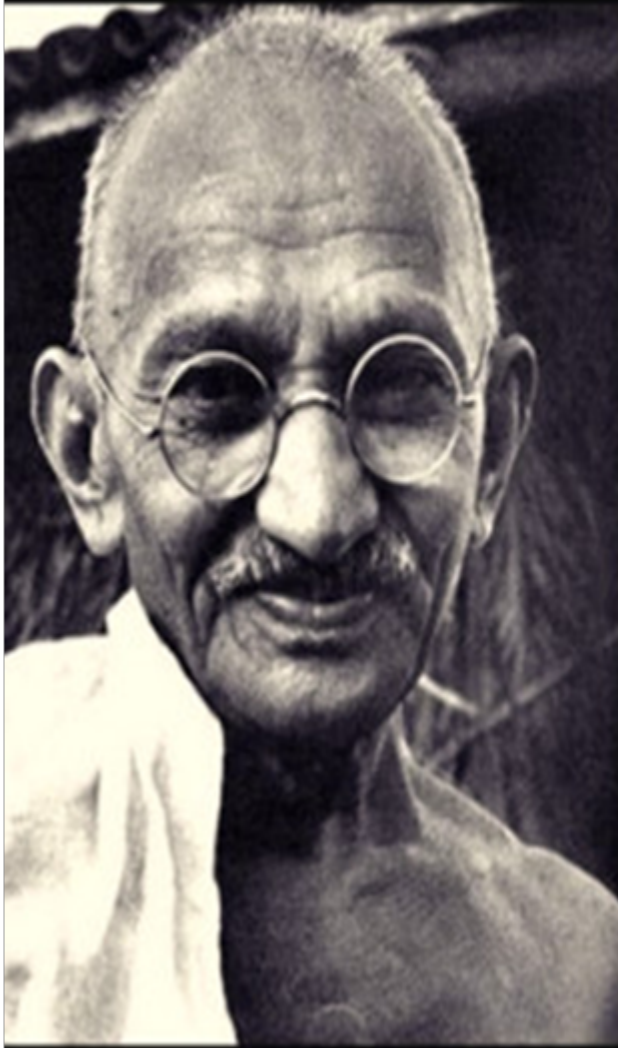
On 2nd October, 2024, **Mahatma Gandhi's** 155th birth anniversary was celebrated across the nation to commemorate his principles and ideals that inspire the nation until the present times, owing to the indispensable role played by him during the freedom struggle.

- His contributions to the freedom struggle earned him the epithet of "**Father of Nation**" which led to his portrait being featured on Indian legal banknotes.
- Being a multi-faceted personality, Mahatma Gandhi had **deep interest in music**, and he always **promoted safeguarding the environment**.

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The weak can never forgive
attribute of the
(Mahatma G

Who was Mahatma Gandhi?

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) was born on **October 2, 1869**, in **Porbandar, Gujarat**. He earned a degree in law from England in 1891.

Before entering Indian politics in 1915, he was in **South Africa** from **1893 to 1914**.

In the course of his struggle in South Africa, he developed his political philosophy based on **non-violence** and **Satyagrah** to give a new direction to the mass movement.

The emergence of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian politics marked the beginning of **new phase** in the Indian national movement, the phase of mass movements. This made Gandhi become the **most important figure in the history of the Indian freedom struggle**.

Arrival of Gandhi in India

Gandhi returned to India in **January 1915**. His efforts were well known in South Africa, not just among the educated but also among the common people.

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- Gandhiji spent a year travelling around British India, getting to know the land and its people on the advice of **Gopal Krishna Gokhale**.
- In **February 1916**, he made his first major public appearance at the inauguration of the **Banaras Hindu University (BHU)**.
- Gandhiji's speech at Banaras revealed that **Indian nationalism was an elite phenomenon, and he wished to make Indian nationalism more properly representative** of the Indian people as a whole.

Champaran Satyagraha (1917)

Champaran Satyagraha was the **first attempt** at mobilising the Indian masses by Gandhi on an invitation by **Rajkumar Shukla** in the context of **indigo peasants** of **Champaran**. This Gandhian Movement was the **First Civil Disobedience** in India.

- It was mainly due to the **tinkathia system of indigo farmers**, where peasants were forced to grow indigo **on 3/20 part of their total land**
- Gandhi intervened in the matter but was asked to leave the place by authorities. However, Gandhi refused to leave, thus disobeying the order. Eventually, Gandhi was able to convince the government about the illness of the tinkathia system and look into the matter
- The **government appointed a committee** to go into the matter and nominated **Gandhi as a member**. As a result, the tinkathia system was abolished, and in a compromise settlement, only 25 % of the money taken by peasants was compensated.
- **Participants: Rajendra Prasad, Narhari Parekh, and J.B. Kripalani**

Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)

Following the Champaran Satyagraha, the next step in mobilising the masses was the workers of Ahmedabad's urban centre **Ahmedabad Mill Strike** was the result of the disagreement between the **textile workers** and the **mill owners** arose in **March 1918** regarding the end of the plague bonus

- **Mill owners paid bonuses of 75% of their salary to retain the workers during the outbreak of the plague in 1917. But, after the end of the plague, workers were demanding an increase of 50 % in wages while mill owners were advocating discontinuance of the bonus. As a result, a deadlock was created**
- Gandhi intervened at the request of **Anusuya Sarabhai** and undertook a **fast unto death**. As a result, owners agreed to the **35% wage hike**.
- This was the **first movement where fasting**, a means of self-suffering to create moral pressure, was used by Gandhi as a political weapon in India.

Kheda Satyagraha (1918)

Due to the failure of the monsoon, the peasants of the Kheda district were in distress. In 1918, they mobilised themselves, demanding revenue relief from the government due to the crop failure and rise in prices. **Kheda Satyagraha** was the **First Non-Cooperation** by Gandhi in the Indian National Movement.

- According to the government's famine code, cultivators were entitled to total remission if crop yield fell below **25% of the average**. But the authorities rejected it. As a result, peasants turned to Gandhi.
- Gandhi intervened on behalf of the poor peasants, advising them to withhold payment and **'fight unto death** against such a **spirit of vindictiveness and tyranny**.'
- The government ordered it to be restrained in the collection of revenues (collected only from those ryots who could afford to pay) and not to confiscate lands. Gandhi decided to withdraw from the struggle.
- **Participants: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Narahari Parikh, and Indulal Yagnik.**

Satyagraha Against the Rowlatt Act (1919)

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In **1917**, a **sedition committee** was formed under **Justice Sidney Rowlatt** to curb revolutionary activities and investigate the 'seditious conspiracy'. It recommended the **Rowlatt Act (Anarchic and Revolutionary Offenses Act of 1919)** to limit the liberty of the people passed by the Imperial Legislative Council. Gandhi launched the Satyagraha against the **Rowlatt Act**.

- The Rowlatt Act allowed political and revolutionary activists to be tried without judicial proceedings or even imprisoned **without trial for two years**. It also suspended the right to **habeas corpus** and the right to appeal.
- Gandhiji called it the "**Black Act**" and launched the satyagraha against the Act. It involved fasting, praying, disobeying laws, and risking arrest and imprisonment. The satyagraha brought Gandhi to the centre of the Indian national movement.
- Gandhi also organised **Satyagraha Sabha**, his own organisation, to carry out the movement. However, due to the violence in some parts of India, Gandhi had to call off the Satyagraha.
- Gandhi's ability to connect with the masses was demonstrated during this Satyagraha. Gandhian ideology and methods for the freedom struggle (Non-violence and Satyagraha) were introduced to the Indian masses.

Non-Cooperation Movement (1921-22)

The horrific massacre at **Jallianwala Bagh** took place in the backdrop of protests **against the Rowlatt Act**. As a result, Mahatma Gandhi launched the **Non-Cooperation Movement** in **1920**.

- In September 1920, the Congress held a **special session in Calcutta** and resolved to accept Gandhi's proposal of non-cooperation with the British government until **Khilafat and Punjab grievances** were addressed and self-government was established.
- This Gandhian movement was merged with the Khilafat movement, which demanded that the Turkish Sultan or **Khalifa retain control** over the Muslim sacred places in the erstwhile **Ottoman empire**.
- **Methods:** Non-cooperation movement included the boycott of schools, colleges, courts, government offices, legislatures, and foreign goods and the return of government-conferred titles and awards.
- **Withdrawal:** Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the non-cooperation movement following the **Chauri Chaura violent incident on 5 February 1922**, in which 23 police officers were killed. After the withdrawal, he focussed on the **constructive programme** of social reforms.

Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34)

After the Non-Cooperation Movement, the **Civil Disobedience Movement** (also known as **Salt Satyagraha**) is regarded as the second major mass movement and a significant advancement in broadening the social reach of India's freedom struggle.

- Gandhi declared at the **Calcutta Congress in 1928** that the British must grant India dominion status, or the country would erupt in a revolution for complete independence. The British paid no attention to this. As a result, INC in its **Lahore session (1929)** demanded '**Purna Swaraj**', and decided to celebrate **26th January** as '**Independence Day**'. It also declared that a **civil disobedience movement** would be started under the leadership of Gandhi.
- Gandhi announced the '**Dandi March**' against the unjust tax on salt as part of the movement. **On April 6 1930**, he violated the salt regulations, thereby launching the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- Induced by Gandhi's extraordinary endeavours at Dandi, defiance of the salt laws spread throughout the country. However, it was halted for a period after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.
- When the movement was resumed after the failure of the Second Round Table conference, it began to dwindle towards the end of 1932. It was **officially withdrawn in May 1934**.

Quit India Movement (1942)

The **Quit India Movement (August Kranti Movement)** was the '**third great wave**' of India's struggle for freedom, **launched on August 8, 1942**, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. This Gandhian Movement was more of a

rejection of British rule than a traditional Satyagraha, and it influenced the unprecedented and tumultuous events that occurred in Indian history over the next five years.

- It was the result of Indian disillusionment with British rule, with the immediate causes **being the failure of the Cripps mission and the hardships caused by World War II**
- On August 8, 1942, the All India Congress Committee met at Gowalia Tank in Bombay and passed the famous Quit India Resolution. On the same day, Gandhi issued his '**Do or Die**' call. It demanded **an end to British rule** in India with immediate effect, the **formation of a provisional government** after the war and the **declaration of free India**.
- As a result, major leaders of the Indian National Congress were arrested and imprisoned without trial by British officials. However, the protests continued across the country with huge mass participation
- Although it did not immediately achieve its goals, it contributed to the weakening of British rule and **paved the way for the independence of India**