

Arrival of Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhiji arrived in India in 1915 from South Africa. Having led Indians in that country in non-violent marches against racist restrictions, he was already a respected leader, known internationally. His South African campaigns had brought him in contact with various types of Indians: Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians; Gujaratis, Tamils and north Indians; and upper-class merchants, lawyers and workers.

Mahatma Gandhi spent his first year in India travelling throughout the country, understanding the people, their needs and the overall situation. His earliest interventions were in local movements in Champaran and Kheda where he led peasants in their struggles against unfair terms and excessive taxes. In Ahmedabad he led a successful millworkers' strike in 1918. In these two movements he also came



into contact with many leaders who were to be his lifelong associates – people like Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhai Patel. Let us now focus on the movement organised between 1919 and 1922.

Rowlatt Act and Jalianwala Bagh Massacre

Mahatma Gandhi did not associate with any Congress faction. He built his own political programme and space in nationalist politics. He launched Champaran campaign in 1917, Kaira protest movement in 1918 and participated in Ahmedabad textile workers agitation in 1918. He became the most popular leader and centre of political activity. In 1919 Gandhiji gave a call for *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Act that the British had just passed. The Act curbed fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression and strengthened police powers. Any person who was suspected by the police of being a terrorist could be arrested and kept in prison without trial. Even when tried it would be a secret trial in which even the tried person could not know the evidence against him or her. Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and others felt that the government had no right to restrict people's basic freedoms. They criticised the Act as "devilish" and tyrannical. Gandhiji asked the Indian people to observe 6 April 1919 as a day of non-violent opposition to this Act, as a day of "humiliation and prayer" and *hartal* (strike). *Satyagraha Sabhas* were set up to launch the movement. The Rowlatt *Satyagraha* turned out to be the first all-India struggle against the British

Communalism and Communal Organisations

Communalism believes in the promotion of the interest of a particular religious community and not the general interests of all. It also believes that the state and government should be run keeping in mind the interest of that particular religious group. This is in contrast to nationalism which believes that the nation is above individual communities and represents the interests of all people including those who may not have any religion at all. This view is also called "Secular" as it holds that the government should neither interfere in the affairs of a religion nor allow any religion to interfere with the government. It should treat all religions equally without favouring any one religion. As you can see, this secular view is opposed to the communal view which seeks to promote the interests of one religion over the others and insists that governments abide by the needs of particular religions.

Communal organisations sprang up in India in the early years of 20th century as the tide of nationalism too was rising. A group of Muslim landlords and nawabs formed the All India Muslim League at Dhaka in 1906. The League supported the partition of Bengal. It desired separate electorates for Muslims, a demand conceded by the government in 1909. Some seats in the councils were now reserved for Muslims who would be elected by Muslim voters. This tempted politicians to gather a following by distributing favours to their own religious groups.

Hindu Mahasabha was formed in 1915 with the objective of uniting Hindus and reconverting those who had converted to other religions. It was headed by leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. They tried to counter the Muslim League and the influence of other religious groups in India.

government although it was largely restricted to cities. In April 1919 there were number of demonstrations and *hartals* in the country and the government used brutal measures to suppress them. The worst example of these atrocities was the firing on a meeting of unarmed people at Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar in Punjab by General Dyer on 13 April, in which about 400 people were killed and thousands injured. On learning about the massacre, Rabindranath Tagore expressed the pain and anger of the country by renouncing his **Knighthood**.

During the Rowlatt *Satyagraha* the

participants tried to ensure that Hindus and Muslims were united in the fight against the British rule. This was also the call of Mahatma Gandhi who always saw India as a land of all the people who lived in the country – Hindus, Muslims and those of other religions. He was keen that Hindus and Muslims support each other in any just cause.

- Do you think it is right to give the police such powers to suppress revolts?
- Why do you think people were so much against such laws during the freedom movement?

Khilafat agitation and the Non-Cooperation Movement

The *Khilafat* issue was one such cause. In 1920 the British imposed a harsh treaty on the Turkish Sultan or *Khalifa*. People were furious about this as they had been about the Jalianwala Bagh massacre. Also, Indian Muslims were keen that the *Khalifa* be allowed to retain control over Muslim sacred places in the erstwhile Ottoman Empire. The leaders of the *Khilafat* agitation, Mohammad Ali and Shaikat Ali, now wished to initiate a full-fledged Non-Cooperation Movement.

Gandhiji supported their call and urged the Congress to campaign against "Punjab wrongs" (Jalianwala massacre), the *Khilafat* wrong and demand *swaraj*. In the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920, Gandhiji was acknowledged as the leader of the Congress. In this session, the objective of the Congress was changed to the achievement of *Swarajya* by all legitimate and peaceful means. Non-Cooperation was accepted as the means to get *Swarajya*.

The Non-Cooperation Movement gained momentum through 1921-22. Thousands of students left government controlled schools and colleges. Many lawyers such as Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, C. Rajagopalachari and Asaf Ali gave up their practices. British titles were surrendered and legislatures were boycotted. People lit public bonfires of foreign cloth. The imports of foreign cloth fell drastically between 1920 and 1922. To this Gandhi added a campaign for people

to spin their own cotton on a *charka* (this cloth is known as *Khadi*). In every house this spread the desire to make the country self reliant.



Fig. 11 B.1 : In the late phase of Indian National Movement Gandhiji adopted Charka as a symbol of Swadeshi

But all this was merely the tip of the iceberg. Large parts of the country were on the brink of a formidable revolt. For example let us see what was happening in Andhra region.

Guntur district was at the centre of nationalist activity and the participation was very widespread including not only students, but also merchants and peasants in the villages. A highlight of the non-cooperation movement was the famous Chirala Perala movement. The government decided to convert this town into a municipality and forced high taxes. About 15,000 people of the town led by Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya refused to pay the taxes and migrated to a new settlement called Ramnagar and remained there for eleven months. There was a powerful movement of non-payment of land revenue by the peasants and mass resignations of village

officers. People said, "*Gandhiji's swaraj is coming and we will not pay taxes to this government.*"

Another major development was the Forest *Satyagraha* in Palnati taluqa of Guntur district and also in Rayachoti taluqa of Kadapa district. Peasants began sending herds of cattle into the forests without paying grazing fees to the forest department. In many villages of Palnadu, people declared Gandhi Raj and attacked police parties. People were convinced that the colonial rule was coming to an end and the forests would be back in the control of the village people. In the two taluqs the forest administration had to virtually close down during the agitation period.

We can see from the above that sometimes people thought of Gandhiji as someone who could help them overcome their misery and poverty. Gandhiji wished to build class unity, not class conflict. Yet, peasants could imagine that he would help them in their fight against zamindars, and agricultural labourers believed, he would provide them land. At times, ordinary people credited Gandhiji with their own achievements. For instance, at the end of a powerful movement, peasants of Pratapgarh in the United Province (now Uttar Pradesh) managed to stop illegal eviction of tenants. But they felt it was Gandhiji who had won this demand for them. At other times, using Gandhiji's name, tribals and peasants undertook actions that did not conform to Gandhian ideals.

- Find out more about Chirala Perala Movement and the Forest *Satyagraha*. Prepare a skit and enact it in the class.

The Happenings of 1922-1929

Mahatma Gandhi, as you know, was against violent movements. He abruptly called off the Non-Cooperation Movement when in February 1922 a crowd of peasants set fire to a police station in Chauri Chaura. Twenty two policemen were killed on that day. The peasants were provoked because the police had fired on their peaceful demonstration.

Once the Non-Cooperation movement was over, Gandhiji's followers stressed that the Congress must undertake constructive work in the rural areas. Other leaders such as C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru argued that the party should fight elections to the councils and enter them in order to influence government policies. Through sincere social work in villages in the mid-1920s, the Gandhians were able to extend their support base. This proved to be very useful in launching the Civil disobedience movement in 1930.

Two important developments of the mid-1920s were the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu organisation and the Communist Party of India. These have very different ideas about the kind of country India should be. Find out about their ideas with the help of your teacher. The revolutionary nationalist Bhagat Singh too was active in this period.

Civil Disobedience Movement: Salt Satyagraha (1930-32)

The Indian National Congress met at Lahore in 1929 under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. In this session, the Congress declared that the attainment of "Purna Swaraj" was its goal and resolved to launch Civil Disobedience Movement to achieve it. The leftists within congress took lead this time giving a national goal and programme. The Congress working committee with this enthusiasm decided that 26th January should be observed as the day of "Purna Swaraj".

On March 12th, 1930 at Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, Gandhiji decided to break the government salt laws (making salt very expensive for the common people) by manufacturing salt at Dandi, a small village on the Gujarat sea-coast. The next morning Gandhiji and his 78 companions began the 375 km trek, from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi. This was covered in 24 days. Day after day newspapers reported his progress, his speeches and the impact on the people. Hundreds of village officials on his route



Fig 11 B.2 : Two posters printed during freedom struggle: 1. Gandhiji at Dandi collecting salt, 2. Sarojini Naidu marching in front of Darshana Salt factory.

resigned their jobs. On 6th April, 1930 Gandhiji reached Dandi, picked up a handful of salt and broke the salt law as a symbol of the Indian people's refusal to live under the British made laws and therefore under the British rule.

A wave of enthusiasm swept the country. Salt laws were broken at many places and even women took part in the

Civil Disobedience Movement. In Delhi alone, 1600 women were imprisoned. This Movement was not confined to the Salt Satyagraha alone. Foreign-cloth shops and liquor shops were picketed and were burned. Hand spinning was taken up as a movement. British schools, colleges and services were boycotted. The people joined in large number in this movement.

The government replied with ruthless repression, lathi charges and firing on unarmed crowds of men and women. Over 90,000 Satyagrahi's including Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were imprisoned. 110 persons were killed and over 300 wounded in police firing. Restrictions were imposed on press. The British attempted to divide the Indians by winning over the Muslims, zamindars and other minorities to its side. But the leaders took up constructive programme throughout the country like wearing

Khaddar, removal of untouchability to bring social cohesion in the movement. In response to the call of Gandhiji, a number of women broke purdah and participated in the movement.

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. The Congress formed governments in 7 out of 11 provinces. In September 1939, after two years of Congress rule in the provinces, the Second World War broke out. Critical of Hitler, Congress leaders were ready to support the British war effort. But in return they wanted that India be granted independence after the war. The British refused to concede the demand. The Congress ministries resigned in protest.

Quit India Movement – 1942 'Do or Die'

Britain wanted to use the people and money of India for the Second World War. Congress demanded that in return for support in the war, India should be given self-rule. But the British Government was in no mood to accept this demand. Congress working committee met on 8th August 1942 at Bombay and passed a resolution stating clearly that "British Rule in India must end immediately". The

World War II (1939–45)

Germany led by Hitler and his Nazi party wanted to gain control over the whole world and declared war on Britain, France, USSR, and other countries. USA joined on the side of England, France and USSR (called Allied Countries). Germany was supported by Japan and Italy. One of the worst wars in human history broke out in 1939 and lasted till 1945 when USSR's armies captured Berlin and the USA dropped atom bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. Most people who cherished the values of democracy and freedom opposed Hitler and supported the Allied Countries in the war. However, in India it created a dilemma as Indians were at the same time fighting the British.

evening after the Quit India Resolution was passed; Gandhiji addressed these memorable words to the Indian people: "Every one of you should from this movement onwards consider yourself a free man or woman and act as if you are free... I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. We shall 'do or die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt."

On the early hours of August 9th, 1942 the Government arrested most of the Congress leaders viz., Gandhiji, Patel, Nehru, Maulana Azad, Acharya Kripalani, Rajendra Prasad and others. The people protest with hartals, strikes, processions all over the country. Unfortunately the movement turned violent. The working class in the factories boycotted the work and students attacked the police stations, post offices, railway-stations and other public places. They cut off Telegraph and Telephone wires and railway lines. They burnt government buildings, vehicles, Military vehicles, Railway carriages. Madras and Bombay were the most effected in this respect. The British authority disappeared in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar,

Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh. In Midnapur, people set up parallel government during 1942-44. As a result of this movement ten lakh pounds worth of property was destroyed. Thirty police personnel and ten army men lost their lives; many people were killed, thousands were arrested in the Government suppression.

Subhash Chandra Bose and INA.

Subhash Chandra Bose had been a Swarajist and a radical nationalist. He organized the Indian National Army (INA) with the cooperation of Rash Bihari Bose in Burma and Andamans. The INA consisted of more than sixty thousand soldiers. He received the help of the Japanese in this fight. On 21st October 1943, the provisional Government of Independent India (Azad Hind) was set up in Singapore. On March 18th, 1944 the INA crossed the frontiers of Burma and entered India with a slogan "Dilli Chalo" - (on to Delhi).

In March 1944, the Indian Flag was hoisted in Kohima. But with the change of fortunes in the war, the launching of a counter-offensive by the British in the winter of 1944-45 and the final defeat of Japan in the Second World War the INA movement collapsed. On August 23rd, 1945, Subhash Chandra Bose is reported to have lost his life in an air crash while going from Bangkok to Tokyo.



Fig 11 B.3: (left) Surrendered INA soldiers, (right below) Jhansi regiment in action, (right top) Post mark



By the end of 1943 over 90,000 people were arrested, and around 1,000 killed in police firings. In many areas orders were given to machine-gun crowds from airplanes. The rebellion, however, ultimately brought the Raj to its knees.

Towards Independence and Partition

Meanwhile, in 1940 the Muslim League had moved a resolution demanding "Independent States" for Muslims in the north-western and eastern areas of the country. The resolution did not mention partition or Pakistan. Why did the League ask for an autonomous arrangement for the Muslims of the subcontinent? From the late 1930s, the League began viewing the Muslims as a separate "nation" from the Hindus. In developing this notion it may have been influenced by the history of

Years of Radical Organisations

The period after 1940 was characterised by intensive activities of radical organisations like the Communist party, trade unions, women's organisations, kisan sabhas and dalit organisations. They mobilised the poor and marginalized peasants and workers, tribals and dalits not only against the British but also against the local exploiters like moneylenders, factory owners and upper caste landlords. They were keen that in the new independent India their interests should be properly represented and their long years of suffering should end and they should get equal rights and opportunities. The national movement which was till then dominated by upper class people gained a new dimension and energy which eventually helped to throw out the British rule. The poor, particularly the outcastes and labourers in eastern India actively participated. The under-tenants in Malabar, tenants in Tebhaga, vetti castes and cultivators in Telangana were the active participants in the movements of 1940s. The food shortage and demand for land has driven them to historic post-second world war movements. The Congress was not in a position to advance these movements as it was actively indulged in negotiations for independence. The Communists who were active in All India Kisan Sabha, a peasant front and intelligentsia through All India People's Theaters Association and All India Students Federation led these movements from below. They were a force to reckon with, which has hastened the British to come to negotiations and quit India.

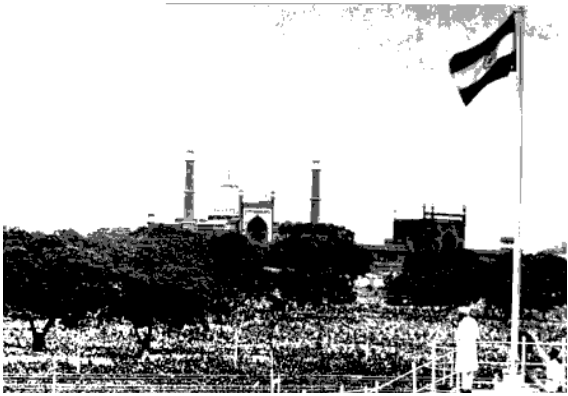


Fig 11B.4 : Jawaharlal Nehru addressing at Red Fort after Independence

tension between some Hindu and Muslim groups in the 1920s and 1930s. More importantly, the provincial elections of 1937 seemed to have convinced the League that Muslims were a minority, and they would always have to play second fiddle in any democratic structure. It feared that Muslims may even go unrepresented. The Congress's rejection of the League's desire to form a joint Congress-League government in the United Provinces in 1937 also annoyed the League.

The Congress's failure to mobilise the Muslim masses in the 1930s allowed the League to widen its social support. It sought to enlarge its support in the early 1940s when most Congress leaders were in jail. At the end of the war in 1945, the British

opened negotiations between the Congress, the League and themselves for the independence of India. The talks failed because the League saw itself as the sole spokesperson of India's Muslims. The Congress could not accept this claim since a large number of Muslims still supported it. Elections to the provinces were again held in 1946. The Congress did well in the "General" constituencies but the League's success in the seats reserved for Muslims was spectacular. It persisted with its demand for "Pakistan". In March 1946 the British cabinet sent a three-member mission (Straford Cripps, Pethik Lawrance, Alexander) to Delhi to examine this demand and to suggest a suitable political framework for a free India. This

mission suggested that India should remain united and constitute itself as a loose confederation with some autonomy for Muslim-majority areas. But it could not get the Congress and the Muslim League to agree to specific details of the proposal. Partition now became more or less inevitable.

As the proposal of the Cabinet Mission failed, the Muslim League decided on mass agitation in support of its demand for Pakistan. It announced 16th August 1946 as "Direct Action Day". On this day riots broke out in Calcutta, lasting several days and resulting in the death of thousands of people. By March 1947 violence spread to different parts of northern India.

Louis Mountbatten who was appointed Viceroy in early 1947 was not able to resolve the differences between the Muslim League and the Congress Party. Consequently, it was agreed that India would be split into Muslim-controlled Pakistan, and Hindu-dominated India. India became independent on 15th August 1947, while Pakistan celebrates its independence on 14th August. Even after partition, many lakhs of people were killed and numerous women had to face untold brutalities. Lakhs of people were forced to flee their homes. Torn asunder from their homelands, they were reduced to being refugees in alien lands. So, the joy of our country's independence from British rule came mixed with the pain and violence of Partition.

Key words

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|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Nationalism | 2. Secular | 3. Terrorist | 4. Extremism |
| 5. Satyagraha | 6. Non Co-operation | 7. Civil disobedience | 8. Subcontinent |

Improve your learning

1. Create a table to show the various efforts of Gandhiji in national movement.

Event	Gandhiji's role

- The national movement fought all attempts of the British government to deny democratic freedom and rights of the people. Give examples of the rights which the government tried to curtail and the movement launched against it.
- To what extent was the Salt satyagraha successful in its objectives? Give your assessment.
- Which of the following was part of national movement:
 - Picketing shops that sell foreign clothes
 - Hand spinning thread to weave clothes
 - Burning imported clothes
 - Wearing khaddar
 - All the above
- What were the different events that led to the partition?
- Look at the India map and fill colours in Pakistan and Bangladesh which are adjoining countries.
- Read the first paragraph under the heading 'The Happenings of 1922-1929' and answer this, 'Gandhiji called off the movement after the violence. How do you support it?'
- As a part of Non Co-operation movement, what incidents took place in our state?
- Write a brief note on Quit India Movement.
- Prepare a timeline chart on Freedom Struggle from 1885 to 1947.