

Part III: CHAPTER 4
MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT
Civil Disobedience and Beyond
Revision Notes

Key points in nutshell:-

- Mahatma Gandhi is the most influential and revered of all the leaders who participated in the freedom struggle of India.
- In January 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India after spending two decades in South Africa.
- It was in South Africa he first focused the distinctive techniques of nonviolent protest known as **Satyagraha** and promoted harmony between religions.
- On Gokhale's advice, he spent one year traveling around British India to know the land and its peoples.
- His first major public appearance was at the opening of the Banaras Hindu University in February 1916.
- Here in his speech, Gandhiji charged the Indian elite with a lack of concern for the laboring poor.
- Gandhiji's speech at the opening of BHU was a statement of intent to make Indian nationalism more properly representative of the Indian people as a whole.
- Many of them venerated Gandhiji, referring to him as their "**Mahatma**".
- He successfully organized **Satyagraha at Champaran** (Bihar in 1917) to ameliorate the condition of the peasants who cultivated indigo.
- In 1918, he started a satyagraha to increase the wages of **Ahmedabad mill workers** by 35 per cent.
- In 1918, he also organised a peasant movement to remit the revenue in **Kheda**.
- In 1919, Gandhiji called for a countrywide campaign against the "Rowlatt Act". It was the **Rowlatt Satyagraha** that made Gandhiji a truly national leader.
- In 1920, after Jalianwala Bagh Massacre he called for a campaign of **non-cooperation** with British Rule and joined hands with the **Khilafat movement**.
- He was of the opinion that by coupling the non-cooperation with the Khilafat would



result in Hindu-Muslim unity to end the colonial rule.

- The British Raj was shaken to its foundations for the first time since the Revolt of 1857.
- Non-cooperation movement was suspended in 1922 after **Chauri-Chaura incident** where 22 policemen were killed by a violent crowd.
- By 1922 Gandhiji had transformed Indian nationalism. It was no longer a movement of professionals and intellectuals, now hundreds of thousands of peasants, workers, and artisans also participated in it.
- Causes of Gandhiji's popularity among Indians - he dressed like them, lived like them and spoke their language.
- Rumours about the miraculous power of Mahatma Gandhi resulted in widespread followers.
- Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison in February 1924 devoted himself in constructive work like - the promotion of home-spun cloth khadi, the abolition of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity etc.
- In 1928, Gandhiji began to think of re-entering politics. After the failure of **Simon Commission**, in its annual session at **Lahore Congress** demanded **Purna Swaraj** and decided to observe 26th January 1930 as Independence Day.
- In Lahore Session of Congress held in December 1929, it was decided that now the struggle will be for complete independence and 26 Jan 1930 will be observed as independence day nationwide.
- Soon after this Gandhi decided to launch a **Salt Satyagraha**.
- On 12 March 1930 - Gandhiji begun his famous 'Salt March' and launched Dandi Satyagraha officially.
- He chose the issue of salt as this was indispensable for every household.
- On 6 April 1930 broke the salt law by making a fistful of salt.
- Taking a cue from Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha, all across large parts of India, peasants breached forest laws, factory workers went on strike, lawyers boycotted courts and students refused to attend government-run educational institutions.
- In November 1930 - **First Round Table Conference** was held - Gandhiji did not attend.
- In 1931, the '**Gandhi-Irwin Pact**' was signed by the terms of which civil disobedience was called off and all prisoners were released. This pact drew many criticisms



because Gandhiji was unable to obtain a commitment to political independence for Indians from the Viceroy, he could obtain merely an assurance of talks.

- The **Second Round Table Conference** was held in 1931 in London. Gandhiji represented the Congress in the meeting but it was inconclusive.
- Gandhiji returned to India and relaunched **Civil Disobedience** but it could not get its momentum.
- In 1935 - a new Government of India Act was formed which promised a representative form of government.
- In 1937 - in Provincial Election, Congress formed ministries in 8 out of 11 provinces.
- In September 1939 - **World War II** broke out. Nehru and Gandhi promised Congress support to the war effort if the British, in return, promised to grant India independence. But the British rejected this offer.
- Through 1940 and 1941, the Congress organised a series of **individual satyagrahas** to pressure the rulers to promise freedom once the war had ended..
- In 1940 - **Two Nation Theory** put forward by Jinnah.
- 1942 - Failure of **Cripps Mission**.
- On 9 August 1942 - **Quit India Movement** was launched by Gandhiji. He along with all prominent leaders was sent to jail.
- 1946- Cabinet Mission- Failed to get the Congress and the League to agree on the federal system.
- On 16th August 1946 - **Direct Action Day** was called by Jinnah to press the League's demand for Pakistan and Communal riots in Bengal, Bihar, U.P, and Punjab.
- In 1947 Lord Mountbatten was appointed as viceroy.
- 15th August 1947- Formal transfer of power, the announcement of partition and India got her independence.

The last heroic days of Gandhiji:-

- On 15th August 1947, Gandhiji was not at Delhi to witness the festivities. He was at Calcutta and undertook 24 hours fast.
- Due to the initiative of Gandhiji and Nehru, the Congress passed a resolution on the rights of the minorities.
- After working to bring peace to Bengal, Gandhiji shifted to Delhi from where he hoped to move on to the riot-torn districts of Punjab. On 30th January 1948, Gandhiji



was shot dead by Nathuram Godse.

Sources to know more about Gandhiji:-

1. Public voice and private scripts.
2. Series of Personal letters published by Gandhiji in his journal Harijan.
3. A bunch of old letters edited by Nehru.
4. Fortnightly Reports of the Home Department.
5. From newspapers.

Time Line	
1915	Mahatma Ghandi returns from South Africa
1917	Champaran Movement
1918	Peasants movements in Kheda (Gujarat,) and workers' movement in Ahmedabad
1919	Rowlatt Satyagraha (March – April)
1919	Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (April)
1921	Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements
1928	Peasant movement in Bardoli
1929	“Purna Swaraj” accepted as congress goal at the Lahore congress (December)
1930	Civil Disobedience Movement begins: Dandi March (March-April)
1931	Gandhi-Irwin pact (March): Second Round Table Conference (December)
1935	Government of Indian Act Promises some form of Representative government
1939	Congress ministries resign
1942	Quit India Movement begins (August)
1946	Mahatma Gandhi visits Naokhali and other riot -torn areas to stop communal violence

