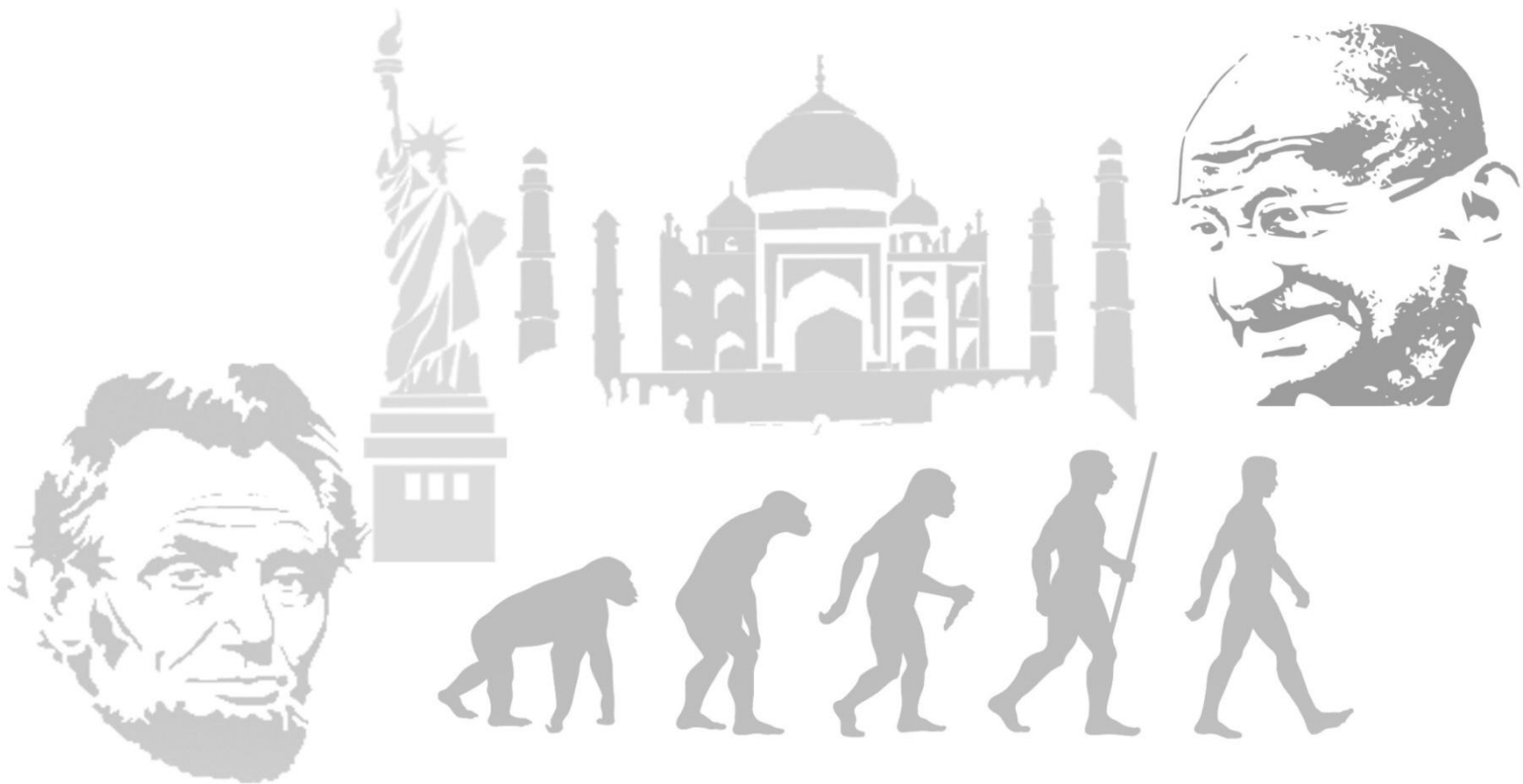


# HISTORY



## Nationalism in India

Similar to many other Asian countries, growth of nationalism in India is associated with the anti-colonial movement. The Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi made the Indian National Movement a mass movement.

### Gandhi and his Idea of Satyagraha

Many Indian soldiers participated in the First World War. They fought for Great Britain, but they were racially discriminated on the war front. Thus, they were disappointed with the Indian Government. During the First World War and the period which followed after it, India faced many economic problems. Some of these were

- Britain increased taxes in India because of huge war expenditures incurred by Britain.
- The prices of commodities almost doubled between 1913 and 1918 as many products were exported to British war fronts.
- There were forced army recruitments by the British in villages for fighting in the First World War.
- There were crop failures in 1919 and 1920–21. These were accompanied by the spread of influenza.



Gandhi

While people were facing these hardships, Gandhi emerged on the Indian political scene with his unique tool of 'Satyagraha'.

Satyagraha according to Gandhi was a unique weapon to fight injustice. It was a novel method of mass agitation. It stressed on the principle of truth, non-violence, tolerance and peaceful protests. Gandhi had already organised a successful satyagraha movement in South Africa. He also organised it successfully at Champaran in Bihar, Kheda in Gujarat and Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

### The Rowlatt Act

The Rowlatt Act was passed in 1919 in the Imperial Legislative Council. This Act empowered the British Government to arrest nationalists and imprisoned them for two years without any trial. Gandhi launched a movement against this unjust Act. Shops were closed and workers of the railway workshop went on strike. Rallies protesting against this Act were organised in various cities.

Alarmed by the large participation of people in the movement, the Government arrested prominent leaders from Amritsar. Gandhi was barred from entering Delhi. On 10 April 1919, the police fired on a peaceful procession. People retaliated by attacking banks and railway stations. On 13 April, a large crowd assembled at Jallianwala Bagh protesting against the arrest of some of their leaders who criticised the Government for passing the Rowlatt Act. General Dyer blocked the exit of the Bagh and fired on the unarmed crowd. This resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people.

People in many north Indian towns protested against the brutal killings at Jallianwala. The Government brutally suppressed these protests.



A pictorial representation of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre

## Non-Cooperation Movement

- Gandhi believed that if Indians do not cooperate with the British, the latter will have to leave India. He proposed to the people that government titles should be surrendered and people should resign from civil services, government-run educational institutions and legislative councils. It also included the boycott of foreign goods.
- The resolution on Non-Cooperation Movement was passed in Nagpur in December 1920.
- After the movement was launched, thousands of students left government schools and colleges in many cities. Teachers from these schools resigned, and lawyers gave up their practices.
- The council elections were boycotted in most provinces except in Madras where the Justice Party participated in the elections.
- As a part of the movement, foreign goods were boycotted and stress was laid on the use of swadeshi products. This led to decline in the import of foreign cloth and gave a boost to the Indian textile industry.
- The movement however slowed down in the cities after a certain period as khadi cloth was more expensive than mill cloth and people could not afford to buy it. Many students and teachers again joined government schools and colleges as there were only a handful of Indian educational institutions.

## Rebellions in the Countryside

- The movement also spread in the countryside. In Awadh, the peasants were led by Baba Ramchandra. The peasant movement was more against the landlords than the British. Jawaharlal Nehru also visited many villages in Awadh trying to understand the problems of the peasants.
- The movement also became violent at some places though violent activities were not supported by the Congress leaders.
- The movement in different terms also spread among the tribal regions of India. The tribals protested against the Government because the British denied their traditional rights in the forests and they were also forced into the 'begar' (forced) labour.
- Alluri Sitaram Raju inspired the tribals to participate in the movement and wear khadi clothes. However, he believed that India can be liberated only by using violence. He was later captured and killed by the British.
- Plantation workers equated the concept of 'swaraj' with their basic rights which were denied by plantation owners. Many plantation workers defied plantation owners, left the plantations and went straight to their home towns.



Alluri Sitaram Raju

Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922 when a group of protestors became violent and killed 23 Indian policemen at Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh. Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement after realising that his peaceful movement had become too violent. At this time, C. R. Das and Moti Lal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party within the Congress as they favoured council politics.

## Simon Commission

The new Tory government constituted a committee to look into the working of the Constitution of India. This committee known as the Simon



Protests against the Simon Commission

Commission arrived in India in 1928. It was vehemently opposed by the people as the commission had all British nationals. It was opposed by all parties including the Congress and the Muslim League.

In 1929, at Lahore, under the president ship of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress demanded 'Poorna Swaraj' and stated that 26 January 1930 would be celebrated as 'Independence Day' and people would take a pledge to continue their struggle to achieve 'Swaraj'.

## The Civil Disobedience Movement

- Gandhi chose 'salt' which was used by every section of society to begin the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhi sent a letter to Viceroy Irwin in 1930 stating eleven demands. One of the most important demands was to abolish the salt law.
- Gandhi stated in this letter that if his demands were not met, the Congress would launch the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- After the refusal of Irwin to accept the demands, Gandhi started the march from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to the coastal town of Dandi. He violated the law and manufactured salt, marking the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- The industrialists first opposed the colonial control of the Indian trade. They protested against the import and export policies of the British. Many industrialists supported the Civil Disobedience Movement after it was launched. However, they later became aloof as they became suspicious of the revolutionary activities and rise of socialism in India.
- Women participated in large numbers in the Movement. They held rallies and picketed shops selling liquor and foreign cloth. However, the Congress was somewhat unwilling to give any position of authority to them in the organisation.



People participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement

## Limits of the Civil Disobedience Movement

- Most of the dalits and their leaders remained aloof from the Congress. They wanted separate electorates for the dalits. When it was granted by the British, Gandhi opposed it and ultimately the matter was resolved by signing the 'Poona Pact' in 1932. Seats were reserved in the provincial and legislatures councils for the dalits though they were to be voted in by the general electorate.
- Many Muslim political organisations also did not support the Movement. They demanded a separate electorate for themselves. The Muslims believed that the Congress had same interests as the Hindu Mahasabha and thus did not support it. They demanded reserved seats in the Central Assembly which was opposed by the Hindu Mahasabha.

## The Sense of Collective Belonging

The feeling of nationalism and the idea of collective belonging to the nation emerged in India because of the following reasons:

- When people fought collectively to oppose the British in various movements and struggles, the feeling of nationalism was born.
- Nationalism also grew as a result of various literary and artistic activities. The idea of India came to be associated with the image of 'Bharat Mata'. This was first created by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. His song 'Vande Mataram' in his novel *Anandamath* inspired the feeling of nationalism in the hearts of millions of Indians.

- Nationalism also developed through movements which attempted to revive Indian folklore. In the late nineteenth century, many nationalists visited villages to collect accounts of folklore. Rabindranath Tagore himself collected many folk songs and ballads in order to inspire people with the feeling of nationalism.
- The tricolour flag became a symbol of Indian nationalism.
- In the nineteenth century, many Indian historians began to write about the glorious past of the country. They refuted the claims of the British historians who had asserted that the Indians were primitive and never had any great culture. The Indian nationalists claimed that Indians had a glorious past. The India economy declined only after the colonisation of India by the British.

All the above factors instilled a sense of nationalism among the Indians.