13 Mahatma Gandhi and the Nationalist Movement

Civil Disobedience and Beyond

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A Leader Announces Himself

In January 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India after two decades of residence abroad.

These years had been spent for the most part in South Africa, where he went as a lawyer, and in time became a leader of the Indian community in that territory.

How South Africa made Gandhi?

Historian Chandran Devanesan remarked, South Africa was “the making of the Mahatma”.

It was in South Africa that Mahatma Gandhi first forged the distinctive techniques of non-violent protest known as satyagraha, first promoted harmony between religions, and first alerted upper-caste Indians to their discriminatory treatment of low castes and women.

Changes in India Gandhi found in 1915

The Indian National Congress now had branches in most major cities and towns.

Through the Swadeshi movement of 1905-07 it had greatly broadened its appeal among the middle classes.

Swadeshi movement movement had created some towering leaders — Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal, and Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab. The three were known as “Lal, Bal and Pal”

Extremist leaders :-leaders advocated militant opposition to colonial rule (Lal, Bal and Pal)

Moderate Leaders: “Moderates” preferred a more gradual and persuasive approach
(Gopal Krishna Gokhale-Gandhiji’s political mentor Mohammad Ali Jinnah - lawyer of Gujarati extraction)
Gandhi in India early activities

➔ On Gokhale’s advice, Gandhiji spent a year travelling around British India, getting to know the land and its peoples.

First major public appearance was at the opening of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU)

➔ His first major public appearance was at the opening of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in February 1916.

➔ princes and philanthropists participated

➔ Important leaders of the Congress were present such as Annie Besant.

➔ Gandhiji was relatively unknown.

➔ Gandhi had been invited on account of his work in South Africa

➔ Gandhiji charged the Indian elite with a lack of concern for the labouring poor.

➔ The opening of the BHU, he said, was “certainly a most gorgeous show”.

➔ But he worried about the contrast between the “richly bedecked noblemen” present and “millions of the poor” Indians who were absent.

➔ Gandhiji told the privileged invitees that “there is no salvation for India unless you strip yourself of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India”.

➔ “Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it.”

➔ Gandhiji reminded those present of the peasants and workers who constituted a majority of the Indian population, yet were unrepresented in the audience.
Importance of Gandhiji’s speech at Banaras

➔ Gandhiji’s speech at Banaras showed that Indian nationalism was an elite phenomenon, a creation of lawyers and doctors and landlords.

➔ It was also a statement of intent – the first public announcement of Gandhiji’s own desire to make Indian nationalism more properly representative of the Indian people as a whole.

2 The Making and Unmaking of Non-cooperation

Early Satyagraha experiments in India

1917 Champaran Satyagraha (Bihar)
1918 Ahammadabad textile Mill labour dispute (Gujarat)
1918 Kheda satyagraha (Gujarat)

➔ At the annual Congress, held in Lucknow in December 1916, Gandhi was approached by a peasant from Champaran in Bihar.

➔ Gandhi was told him about the harsh treatment of peasants by British indigo planters.

➔ Mahatma Gandhi was to spend much of 1917 in Champaran, seeking to obtain for the peasants security of tenure as well as the freedom to cultivate the crops of their choice.

➔ The following year, 1918, Gandhiji was involved in two campaigns in his home state of Gujarat.

First, he intervened in a labour dispute in Ahmedabad, demanding better working conditions for the textile mill workers.

Second, He joined peasants in Kheda in asking the state for the remission of taxes following the failure of their harvest.


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- During the Great War of 1914-18, the British had instituted censorship of the press and permitted detention without trial.
- On the recommendation of a committee chaired by Sir Sidney Rowlatt, these tough measures were continued.
- In response, Gandhiji called for a countrywide campaign against the “Rowlatt Act”.
- In towns across North and West India, life came to a standstill, as shops shut down and schools closed in response to the bandh call.
- The protests were particularly intense in the Punjab.
- Gandhiji was detained while proceeding to the Punjab, prominent local Congressmen were arrested.

Jallianwala Bagh massacre

- The situation in the province grew progressively more tense, reaching a bloody climax in Amritsar in April 1919.
- A British Brigadier ordered his troops to open fire on a nationalist meeting.
- More than four hundred people were killed in what is known as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

“Non-cooperation” movement

- It was the Rowlatt satyagraha that made Gandhiji a truly national leader.
- Gandhiji called for a campaign of “non-cooperation” with British rule.
Indians who wished colonialism to end were asked to stop attending schools, colleges and law courts, and not pay taxes.

In sum, they were asked to adhere to a “renunciation of (all) voluntary association with the (British) Government”.

If non-cooperation was effectively carried out, said Gandhiji, India would win swaraj within a year.

Merges with Khilafat movement

To broaden the struggle Gandhi had joined hands with the Khilafat Movement that sought to restore the Caliphate, a symbol of Pan-Islamism which had recently been abolished by the Turkish ruler Kemal Attaturk.

What was the Khilafat Movement?

The Khilafat Movement, (1919 -1920) was a movement of Indian Muslims, led by Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali.

Khilafat Movement demanded the following:

a) The Turkish Sultan or Khalifa must retain control over the Muslim sacred places in the Ottoman empire

b) The jazirat-ul-Arab (Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Palestine) must remain under Muslim sovereignty;

c) The Khalifa must be left with sufficient territory to enable him to defend the Islamic faith.

The Congress supported the movement and Mahatma Gandhin sought to conjoin it to the Non-cooperation Movement.

2.1 Knitting a popular movement

Non-cooperation

Gandhiji hoped that by coupling non-cooperation with Khilafat, India’s two major religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, could collectively bring an end to colonial rule.

Students stopped going to schools and colleges run by the government.
Lawyers refused to attend court.

The working class went on strike in many towns and cities: according to official figures, there were 396 strikes in 1921, involving 600,000 workers and a loss of seven million workdays.

Hill tribes in northern Andhra violated the forest laws.

Farmers in Awadh did not pay taxes.

Peasants in Kumaun refused to carry loads for colonial officials.

Peasants, workers, and others interpreted and acted upon the call to “non-cooperate” with colonial rule in ways that best suited their interests.

“Non-cooperation,” wrote Mahatma Gandhi’s American biographer Louis Fischer, “became the name of an epoch in the life of India and of Gandhiji.

It entailed denial, renunciation, and self-discipline.

It was training for self-rule.”

As a consequence of the Non-Cooperation Movement the British Raj was shaken to its foundations for the first time since the Revolt of 1857.

Chauri Chaura incident and call off non-cooperation

Why non cooperation movement called off?

In February 1922, a group of peasants attacked and torched a police station in the hamlet of Chauri Chaura, in the United Provinces (now, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand).

Several constables perished in the conflagration.

This act of violence prompted Gandhiji to call off the movement altogether.

During the Non-Cooperation Movement thousands of Indians were put in jail.

Gandhiji himself was arrested in March 1922, and charged with sedition.
The judge who presided over his trial, Justice C.N. Broomfield, made a remarkable speech while pronouncing his sentence (six years’ imprisonment) (see text)

“If the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I”.

2.2 A people’s leader

By 1922, Indian national movement was no longer a movement of professionals and intellectuals; now, hundreds of thousands of peasants, workers and artisans also participated in it.

How Gandhi became popular?

1 Dress-simple
2 Language-common people’s
3 life - common man
4 Working on the charkha
5 appearance symbolising asceticism and abstinence
6 rumours spread of his miraculous powers

Many people venerated Gandhiji, referring to him as their Mahatma”.

They appreciated the fact that he dressed like them, lived like them, and spoke their language.

Unlike other leaders he did not stand apart from the common folk, but empathised and even identified with them.

Dress-simple dhoti or loincloth while other nationalist leaders dressed for formally, wearing a Western suit or an Indian bandgala, Gandhiji went among the people in a simple dhoti or loincloth.

working on the charkha Mahatma Gandhi with the charkha has become the most abiding image of Indian nationalism.

Gandhi spent part of each day working on the charkha (spinning wheel), and encouraged other nationalists to do likewise.
The act of spinning allowed Gandhiji to break the boundaries that prevailed within the traditional caste system, between mental labour and manual labour.

Known variously as “Gandhi baba”, “Gandhi Maharaj”, or simply as “Mahatma”, Gandhiji appeared to the Indian peasant as a saviour.

In a fascinating study, the historian Shahid Amin has traced the image of Mahatma Gandhi among the peasants of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

A Hindi newspaper in Gorakhpur reported the atmosphere during his speeches (see text book)

**Nature of Rumours related to Gandhi**

Wherever Gandhiji went, rumours spread of his miraculous powers.

**Roumur 1** Gandhi had been sent by the King to redress the grievances of the farmers, and that he had the power to overrule all local officials.

**Roumur 2** Gandhiji’s power was superior to that of the English monarch, and that with his arrival the colonial rulers would flee the district.

**Roumur 3** villagers who criticised Gandhiji found their houses mysteriously falling apart or their crops failing.

2 Different ways nationalism was taken to the farthest corners of the country

1. “Praja Mandals” in princely states
   - A series of “Praja Mandals” were established to promote the nationalist creed in the princely states.

2. Linguistic based provincial committees of the Congress
   - The provincial committees of the Congress were based on linguistic regions, rather than on the artificial boundaries of British India.
prosperous businessmen and industrialists support Congress

➔ Indian entrepreneurs recognised that, in a free India, the favours enjoyed by their British competitors would come to an end.
➔ Some of entrepreneurs, such as G.D. Birla, supported the national movement openly; others did so tacitly.

“Gandhian nationalism”

➔ Between 1917 and 1922, a group of highly talented Indians attached themselves to Gandhiji.


After release from prison 1924

As a social reformer

➔ Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison in February 1924

➔ He chose to devote his attention to
  The promotion of home-spun cloth (khadi),
  The abolition of untouchability.
  The abolition of child marriage
  The Hindu-Muslim harmony.
➔ On the economic front Indians had to learn to become self-reliant – hence his stress on the significance of wearing khadi rather than mill-made cloth imported from overseas

Charkha

➔ Mahatma Gandhi was profoundly critical of the modern age in which machines enslaved humans and displaced labour.

➔ He saw the charkha as a symbol of a human society that would not glorify machines and technology.

➔ The spinning wheel, moreover, could provide the poor with supplementary income and make them self-reliant
3. The Salt Satyagraha

A Case Study

1928 Simon Commission boycott
1928 Satyagraha in Bardoli
1929 Lahore session of congress
1930 Civil disobedience Movement

Simon Commission boycott 1928

➔ In 1928, there was an all-India campaign in opposition to the all-White Simon Commission, sent from England to enquire into conditions in the colony.

➔ Gandhiji did not himself participate in this movement, although he gave it his blessings,

➔ Gandhi conducted a peasant satyagraha in Bardoli in the same year.

Importance of Lahore Session of Congress

➔ In the end of December 1929, the Congress held its annual session in the city of Lahore.

➔ The meeting was significant for two things:

1. In 1928, the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President, signifying the passing of the baton of leadership to the younger generation; and

2. the proclamation of commitment to “Purna Swaraj”, or complete independence.

How first ‘Independence day’ observed On 26 January 1930?

➔ On 26 January 1930, “Independence Day” was observed, with the national flag being hoisted in different venues, and patriotic songs being sung.

➔ Gandhiji himself issued precise instructions as to how the day should be observed.
Gandhiji suggested that the time of the meeting be advertised in the traditional way, by the beating of drums.

The celebrations would begin with the hoisting of the national flag.

The rest of the day would be spent “in doing some constructive work, whether it is spinning, or service of ‘untouchables’, or reunion of Hindus and Mussalmans, or prohibition work, or even all these together, which is not impossible”.

Participants would take a pledge affirming that it was “the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil”, and that “if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it”.

3.1 Dandi

Civil disobedience Movement-1930

Soon after the observance of this “Independence Day”, Mahatma Gandhi announced that he would lead a march to break one of the most widely disliked laws in British India, which gave the state a monopoly in the manufacture and sale of salt.

Why Salt?

His picking on the salt monopoly was another illustration of Gandhi’s tactical wisdom.

For in every Indian household, salt was indispensable; yet people were forbidden from making salt even for domestic use, compelling them to buy it from shops at a high price.

The state monopoly over salt was deeply unpopular; by making it his target, Gandhiji hoped to mobilise a wider discontent against British rule.
Dandi March

➔ Gandhiji had given advance notice of his “Salt March” to the viceroy Lord Irwin.

➔ On 12 March 1930, Gandhiji began walking from his ashram at Sabarmati towards the ocean.

➔ He reached his destination three weeks later, making a fistful of salt as he did and thereby making himself a criminal in the eyes of the law.

➔ Meanwhile, parallel salt marches were being conducted in other parts of the country.

Other streams of protest

➔ Across large parts of India, peasants breached the hated colonial forest laws that kept them and their cattle out of the woods in which they had once roamed freely.

➔ In some towns, factory workers went on strike while lawyers boycotted British courts and students refused to attend government-run educational institutions.

➔ Gandhiji’s call had encouraged Indians of all classes to make manifest their own discontent with colonial rule.

Response from rulers

➔ The rulers responded by detaining the dissenters.

➔ In the wake of the Salt March, nearly 60,000 Indians were arrested, among them, of course, Gandhiji himself.

➔ The progress of Gandhiji’s march to the seashore can be traced from the secret reports filed by the police officials deputed to monitor his movements.

How Gandhi used Dandi yatra to spread his ideas?

➔ In one village, Wasna, Gandhiji told the upper castes that “if you are out for Swaraj you must serve untouchables.”
➔ You won’t get Swaraj merely by the repeal of the salt taxes or other taxes.

➔ For Swaraj you must make amends for the wrongs which you did to the untouchables.

➔ For Swaraj, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Sikhs will have to unite.

These are the steps towards Swaraj.”

➔ The police spies reported that Gandhiji’s meetings were very well attended, by villagers of all castes, and by women as well as men.

➔ Writing to the government, the District Superintendent of Police remarked, “Mr Gandhi appeared calm and collected ,He is gathering more strength as he proceeds.”

The progress of the Salt March and TIME magazine

➔ The American news magazine, ’Time’ scorned at Gandhiji’s looks, writing with disdain of his “spindly frame” and his “spidery loins”.

➔ Thus in its first report on the march, Time was deeply sceptical of the Salt March reaching its destination.

➔ It claimed that Gandhiji “sank to the ground” at the end of the second day’s walking; the magazine did not believe that “the emaciated saint would be physically able to go much further”.

➔ But within a week TIME had changed its mind.

➔ The massive popular following that the march had garnered, wrote Time, had made the British rulers “desperately anxious”.

➔ they now saluted as a “Saint” and “Statesman”, who was using “Christian acts as a weapon against men with Christian beliefs”
Why was salt the symbol of protest? This is what Mahatma Gandhi wrote:
see text book

3.2 Dialogues

(Round table conferences1930,31,32)

Why salt march is notable: three reasons

➔ First, Mahatma Gandhi to world attention, march was widely covered by the European and American press.

➔ Second, it was the first nationalist activity in which women participated in large numbers. The socialist activist Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was one of numerous women who courted arrest by breaking the salt or liquor laws.

➔ Third, it was the Salt March which forced upon the British the realisation that their Raj would not last forever

"Round Table Conferences"

➔ The British government convened a series of "Round Table Conferences" in London.

First Round Table Conference in November 1930

➔ The first meeting was held in November 1930
➔ Indian National Congress did not participate
➔ First round table conference became a failure

"Gandhi-Irwin Pact"

➔ Gandhiji was released from jail in January 1931
The following month had several long meetings with the Viceroy Irwin.

These culminated in what was called the “Gandhi-Irwin Pact’,

a) civil disobedience would be called off,
b) all prisoners released,
c) salt manufacture allowed along the coast.

**A second Round Table Conference December 1931**

A second Round Table Conference was held in London in the latter part of 1931.

Gandhiji represented the Congress.

However, his claims that his party represented all of India came under challenge from three parties: from the Muslim League, which claimed to stand for the interests of the Muslim minority; from the Princes, who claimed that the Congress had no stake in their territories; and from the brilliant lawyer and thinker B.R. Ambedkar, who argued that Gandhiji and the Congress did not really represent the lowest castes.

Mahatma Gandhi opposed the demand for separate electorates for “lower castes”. He believed that this would prevent their integration into mainstream society and permanently segregate them from other caste Hindus.

The Conference in London was inconclusive, so Gandhiji returned to India and resumed civil disobedience.

The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, was deeply unsympathetic to the Indian leader.

In a private letter to his sister, Willingdon wrote: “It’s a beautiful world if it wasn’t for Gandhi’

**Third Round Table Conference 1932 and Govt.of India act 1935**

Third round table conference held in 1932 without participation of Congress

Govt.of India act passed on the basis of conference
Government of India Act promised some form of representative government.

Election in 1937

- An election held on the basis of a restricted franchise, the Congress won a comprehensive victory.
- Now eight out of 11 provinces had a Congress “Prime Minister”, working under the supervision of a British Governor.

Why Congress ministries resigns in 1939?

- In September 1939, two years after the Congress ministries assumed office, the Second World War broke out.
- Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had both been strongly critical of Hitler and the Nazis.
- Accordingly, they promised Congress support to the war effort if the British, in return, promised to grant India independence once hostilities ended.
- The offer was refused by Congress.
- In protest, the Congress ministries resigned in October 1939.

Series of individual satyagrahas 1940 1941

- Through 1940 and 1941, the Congress organised a series of individual satyagrahas to pressure the rulers to promise freedom once the war had ended.

Muslim league resolution of 1940

A three-way struggle between the Congress, the Muslim League, and the British

- In March 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding a measure of autonomy for the Muslim-majority areas of the subcontinent.
- The political landscape was now becoming complicated: it was no longer Indians versus the British; rather, it had become a three-way struggle between the Congress, the Muslim League, and the British.
At this time Britain had an all-party government, whose Labour members were sympathetic to Indian aspirations.

But Conservative Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was a diehard imperialist.

In the spring of 1942, Churchill was persuaded to send one of his ministers, Sir Stafford Cripps, to India to try and forge a compromise with Gandhiji and the Congress.

Congress insisted that if it was to help the British defend India from the Axis powers, then the Viceroy had first to appoint an Indian as the Defence Member of his Executive Council.

Talks broke down mission failed

4. Quit India

After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch his third major movement against British rule.

This was the “Quit India” campaign, which began in August 1942.

Although Gandhiji was jailed at once, younger activists organised strikes and acts of sabotage all over the country.

Particularly active in the underground resistance were socialist members of the Congress, such as Jayaprakash Narayan.

In several districts, such as Satara in the west and Medinipur in the east, “independent” governments were proclaimed.

The British responded with much force, yet it took more than a year to suppress the rebellion.

“Quit India” was genuinely a mass movement, bringing into its ambit hundreds of thousands of ordinary Indians.

It especially energised the young who, in very large numbers, left their colleges to go to jail.
Muslim league influence grows

➔ Jinnah and his colleagues in the Muslim League worked patiently at expanding their influence.

➔ It was in these years that the League began to make a mark in the Punjab and Sind, provinces where it had previously had scarcely any presence.

➔ In June 1944, with the end of the war in sight, Gandhiji was released from prison.

➔ Later that year he held a series of meetings with Jinnah, seeking to bridge the gap between the Congress and the League.

Wavell plan 1945

➔ In 1945, a Labour government came to power in Britain and committed itself to granting independence to India.

➔ the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, brought the Congress and the League together for a series of talks.

➔ Early in 1946 fresh elections were held to the provincial legislatures.

➔ The Congress swept the “General” category, but in the seats specifically reserved for Muslims the League won an overwhelming majority.

Cabinet Mission 1946

➔ A Cabinet Mission sent in the summer of 1946 failed to get the Congress and the League to agree on a federal system that would keep India together while allowing the provinces a degree of autonomy.

Muslim League’s direct action on 16 August 1946

➔ After the talks broke down, Jinnah called for a “Direct Action Day” to press the League’s demand for Pakistan.

➔ On the designated day, 16 August 1946, bloody riots broke out in Calcutta.
The violence spread to rural Bengal, then to Bihar, and then across the country to the United Provinces and the Punjab. In some places, Muslims were the main sufferers, in other places, Hindus.

Mountbatten plan

India gains independence

In February 1947, Wavell was replaced as Viceroy by Lord Mountbatten.

Mountbatten called one last round of talks, but when these too proved inconclusive he announced that British India would be freed, but also divided.

The formal transfer of power was fixed for 15 August.

When that day came, it was celebrated with gusto in different parts of India.

In Delhi, there was “prolonged applause” when the President of the Constituent Assembly began the meeting by invoking the Father of the Nation – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Outside the Assembly, the crowds shouted “Mahatma Gandhi ki jai”.

5. The Last Heroic Days

Mahatma Gandhi was not present at the festivities in the capital on 15 August 1947.

He was in Calcutta, but he did not attend any function or hoist a flag there either.

Gandhiji marked the day with a 24-hour fast.

The freedom he had struggled so long for had come at an unacceptable price, with a nation divided and Hindus and Muslims at each other’s throats.
Through September and October, writes his biographer D.G. Tendulkar, Gandhiji “went round hospitals and refugee camps giving consolation to distressed people”.

He “appealed to the Sikhs, the Hindus and the Muslims to forget the past and not to dwell on their sufferings but to extend the right hand of fellowship to each other, and to determine to live in peace.”

At the initiative of Gandhiji and Nehru, the Congress now passed a resolution on “the rights of minorities”.

The party had never accepted the “two-nation theory”: forced against its will to accept Partition, it still believed that “India is a land of many religions and many races, and must remain so”.

Whatever be the situation in Pakistan, India would be “a democratic secular State.

Many scholars have written of the months after Independence as being Gandhiji’s “finest hour”.

After working to bring peace to Bengal, Gandhiji now shifted to Delhi, from where he hoped to move on to the riot-torn districts of Punjab.

While in the capital, his meetings were disrupted by refugees who objected to readings from the Koran, or shouted slogans asking why he did not speak of the sufferings of those Hindus and Sikhs still living in Pakistan.

In fact, as D.G. Tendulkar writes, Gandhiji “was equally concerned with the sufferings of the minority community in Pakistan.

End of Gandhi’s life

There was an attempt on Gandhiji’s life on 20 January 1948, but he carried on undaunted.

On 26 January, he spoke at his prayer meeting of how that day had been celebrated in the past as Independence Day.

Gandhiji had fought a lifelong battle for a free and united India; and yet, when the country was divided, he urged that the two parts respect and befriend one another.
Assassination

➔ At his daily prayer meeting on the evening of 30 January, Gandhiji was shot dead by a young man.

➔ The assassin, who surrendered afterwards, was a Brahmin from Pune named Nathuram Godse, the editor of an extremist Hindu newspaper who had denounced Gandhiji as “an appeaser of Muslims”.

Response to Death of Gandhi

➔ Gandhiji’s death led to an extraordinary outpouring of grief, with rich tributes being paid to him from across the political spectrum in India, and moving appreciations coming from such international figures as George Orwell and Albert Einstein.

Response of TIME magazine to Gandhi's death

➔ Time magazine, had once mocked Gandhiji’s physical size and seemingly non-rational ideas

➔ Time magazine now compared his martyrdom to that of Abraham Lincoln: it was a bigoted American who had killed Lincoln for believing that human beings were equal regardless of their race or skin colour; and it was a bigoted Hindu who had killed Gandhiji for believing that friendship was possible, indeed necessary, between Indians of different faiths.

➔ In this respect, as Time wrote, “The world knew that it had, in a sense too deep, too simple for the world to understand, connived at his (Gandhiji’s) death as it had connived at Lincoln’s.”

6. Knowing Gandhi

Sources

1 Public voices(speeches)
2 Private scripts(letters)
3 Autobiographies
4 Govt. records or police reports
5 News paper reports
6.1 Public voice and private scripts

➔ One important source is the writings and speeches of Mahatma Gandhi and his contemporaries.

➔ Speeches, allow us to hear the public voice of an individual.

➔ Private letters give us a glimpse of his or her private thoughts.

➔ In letters we see people expressing their anger and pain, their dismay and anxiety, their hopes and frustrations.

➔ Mahatma Gandhi regularly published in his journal, Harijan, letters that others wrote to him.

➔ Nehru edited a collection of letters written to him during the national movement and published A Bunch of Old Letters.

6.2 Framing a picture: Autobiographies

➔ Autobiographies similarly give us an account of the past that is often rich in human detail.

➔ We need to remember that they are retrospective accounts written very often from memory.

➔ They tell us what the author could recollect, what he or she saw as important, or was keen on recounting, or how a person wanted his or her life to be viewed by others.

➔ So in reading these accounts we have to try and see what the author does not tell us; we need to understand the reasons for that silence – those wilful or unwitting acts of forgetting.

6.3 Through police eyes

➔ The letters and reports written by policemen and other officials now can be accessed in archives.

➔ The fortnightly reports were prepared by the Home Department from the early twentieth century.

➔ These reports were based on police information from the localities, but often expressed what the higher officials saw, or wanted to believe.
6.4 From newspapers

➔ One important source is newspapers, published in English as well as in the different Indian languages.

➔ Newspaper accounts may be prejudiced.

➔ The accounts that were published in a London newspaper would be different from the report in an Indian nationalist paper.

➔ Every statement made in these cannot be accepted literally as representing what was happening on the ground.

➔ They often reflect the fears and anxieties of officials who were unable to control a movement.

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<td>Jallianwala Bagh massacre (April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Peasant movement in Bardoli</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>“Purna Swaraj” accepted as Congress goal at the Lahore Congress (December)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Civil Disobedience Movement begins; Dandi March (March-April)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Gandhi-Irwin Pact (March); Second Round Table Conference (December)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Government of India Act promises some form of representative government</td>
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<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Congress ministries resign</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Quit India Movement begins (August)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi visits Noakhali and other riot-torn areas to stop communal violence</td>
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