

# Ideology of mahatma gandhi and subhas chandra history essay



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In January 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to his homeland 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. As the historian Chandran Devanesan has 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 alerted the ways of upper-caste Indians to their discriminatory treatment of low castes and women. The India that Mahatma Gandhi saw when he came back in 1915 was rather different from the one that he had seen in 1893. Although still a colony of the British, it was far more active in a political sense. 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. That movement had thrown up some towering leaders - among them 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”, the alliteration conveying the all-India character of their struggle, since their native provinces were very distant from one another. Where these leaders advocated militant opposition to colonial rule, there was a group of “ Moderates” who preferred a more gradual and persuasive approach. Among these Moderates were Gandhiji’s acknowledged political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, as well as Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who, like Gandhiji, was a lawyer of Gujarati extraction trained in London. On Gokhale’s advice, Gandhiji spent a year travelling around British India, getting to know the land and its people.

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## **1. 1. The Making and Unmaking of Non-cooperation**

Mahatma Gandhi spent much of the year 1917 in Champaran, seeking to obtain for the peasants the 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. Then he joined peasants in Kheda in asking the state for the remission of taxes following the failure of their harvest.

These initiatives in Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda marked Gandhiji out as a nationalist with a deep sympathy for the poor. At the same time, these were all localised struggles. Then, in 1919, the colonial rulers delivered into Gandhiji's lap an issue from which he could construct a much wider movement. During the Great War of 1914-18, the British had instituted censorship of the press and permitted detention without trial. Now, 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, where many men had served on the British side in the War - expecting to be rewarded for their service. Instead, they were detained on the Rowlatt Act and Gandhiji was arrested while proceeding to Punjab, even though he was a prominent local Congressman. The situation in the province grew progressively more tense, reaching a bloody climax in Amritsar in April 1919, when 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. It was the Rowlatt satyagraha that made Gandhiji a truly national leader. Emboldened by its success, 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 total, they were asked to adhere to a “ renunciation of (all) voluntary association with the (British) Government”. If non-cooperation was effectively carried out, remarked Gandhiji, India would win swaraj within a year. To broaden the struggle further, he 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.

## **1. 2. Khilafat Movement**

Gandhiji hoped that by coupling non-cooperation with Khilafat, India’s two major religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, could collectively bring an end to the colonial rule. These movements certainly unleashed a surge of popular action that was altogether unprecedented in colonial India. Students stopped going to schools and colleges run by the government. Lawyers refused to attend court and 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. The countryside was seething with discontent too. 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. These protest movements were sometimes carried out in defiance of the local nationalist

leadership. Peasants, workers, and others interpreted and acted upon the call to “non-cooperate” with colonial rule in ways that best suited their interests, rather than conform to the dictates laid down from above. “

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

Non-cooperation was negative enough to be peaceful but positive enough to be effective. 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 very

foundations for the first time since the Revolt of 1857.

### **1. 3. A People’s Leader**

By 1922, Gandhiji had transformed Indian nationalism, thereby redeeming the promise he made in his BHU speech of February 1916. It was no longer a movement of professionals and intellectuals; now, hundreds of thousands of peasants, workers and artisans also participated in it. Many of them 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.

### **1. 4. The Salt Satyagraha**


For several years after the Non-cooperation Movement ended, Mahatma Gandhi focused on his social reform work. In 1928, however, he began to think of re-entering politics. That year 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  
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participate in this movement, though he gave his blessings, but, he also performed a peasant satyagraha in Bardoli in the same year. In the end of December 1929, the Congress held its annual session in the city of Lahore. The meeting was significant for two things: the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President, signifying the passing of the baton of leadership to the younger generation; and the proclamation of commitment to “ Purna Swaraj”, or complete independence. Now the pace of politics picked up once more. On 26 January 1930, “ Independence Day” was observed, with the national flag being hoisted in different venues, with patriotic songs being sung. Gandhiji himself issued precise instructions as to how the day should be observed. “ It would be good,” he said, “ if the declaration [of Independence] is made by whole villages, whole cities even ... It would be well if all the meetings were held at the identical minute in all the places.”

## **1. 5. Dandi**

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. His picking on the salt monopoly was another illustration of Gandhiji’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.

As with Non- cooperation, apart from the officially sanctioned nationalist campaign, there were numerous other streams of protest. Across large parts

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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. As in 1920-22, Gandhiji's new call had encouraged Indians of all classes to manifest their own discontent with the colonial rule. 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.

## **1. 6. Quit India**

"Quit India" was genuinely a mass movement, bringing into its ambit hundreds of thousands of ordinary Indians. It especially energized the young who, in very large numbers, left their colleges to go to jail. However, while the Congress leaders languished in jail, 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. In 1945, a Labour government came to power in Britain and committed itself to granting independence to India. Meanwhile, back in 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. The political polarization was just complete.

## **2. Subhas Chandra Bose's Ideology**

### **2. 1. Women Equality**

Subhas Chandra Bose imbibed the ideals of his political mentor, Deshabandhu Chitta Ranjan and spiritual mentor, Swami Vivekananda in regard to female education and female emancipation and used to cite the examples of noble and scholarly women of ancient India like Maitreyee, Gargee, Khana and Lilabatee. Bose wanted that women should be given a very elevated position in the family and society, and believed in female emancipation in the true sense of the term and in liberating women from all shackles and artificial disabilities – social, economic and political. According to him, in the Free India, there must not be any discrimination on the grounds of caste, race, sex, creed or wealth.

The glorified role played by women in the Indian national struggle, especially during the Civil Disobedience Movement with undaunted bravery and exemplary spirit of sacrifice, shaped his attitude towards women. The love and affection and help he received from few women, especially his own mother Prabhabati Devi, C. R. Das's ideal consort Basanti Devi and Sarat Chandra Bose's wife Bibhabati Devi had enormous influence in shaping his views about women.

Subhas Chandra Bose rightly diagnosed that illiteracy and economic dependence were the root cause of serfdom of women. Bose spoke firmly in favour of removing all obstacles in the way of women's emancipation. He spoke in favour of all-round education for women for which he formulated a recipe which included literacy, physical and vocational education or training



on light Cottage Industries. He was a supporter of widow remarriage and abolition of Purdah system.

## **2. 2. Unique Political Ideology**

The political philosophy of Subhas Chandra Bose requires an enunciation and analysis from the angles of his spiritualistic, nationalistic, secularistic, democratic and socialistic characteristics.

### **Spiritualistic Characteristics:**

A spiritual approach of his life was originally initiated under the influence of his deeply religious parents. Subsequently, his searching mind, right from his school days could explore out the meaning, significance and objectives of human life when he came in contact with the teachings, writings and philosophy of Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo Ghose.

### **Nationalistic Characteristics:**

Subhas Chandra Bose's father was a government pleader and Public Prosecutor and became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council and earned the title of Rai Bahadur, but he resigned from the said post and renounced the title of Rai Bahadur as a protest against the repressive policies of the British Government.

### **Secularistic Characteristics:**

Bose believed that secularism is not irreligion or atheism but tolerance of each-other's faith, mutual accommodation and peaceful co-existence. It involves spiritual consciousness and establishment of contact with the

divine. Subhas's philosophy of nationalism acquired a spiritual tenor under the influence of his parents, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Aurobindo.

### **Socialistic Characteristics**

In his Free India, Subhas Chandra Bose had the aim of creating an egalitarian society in which all members would enjoy almost equal economic benefits and social status, and there would not be any distinction between man and man on account of accident of birth, parentage, caste and creed.

### **Democratic Characteristics**

Subhas Chandra Bose developed an ethical approach to life based on sacrifice, renunciation, self-abnegation and self sacrifice which is in a way the core of a democratic way of life. These ethical and spiritual ideals contributed to his formulation of a political philosophy in consistence with Indian culture and civilisation. " The big joint family taught him love, generosity, kindness, patience, tolerance, co-operation and sympathy, the very ingredients of democracy."

### **2. 3. Economic View**

According to Subhas, liberty broadly signified political, economic and social freedom. For him economic freedom was the essence of social and political freedom. Subhas Chandra Bose bravely fought for India's independence but this independence was also an economic necessity for him. He said, " The problem of giving bread to our starving millions - the problem of clothing and educating them - the problem of improving the health and physique of the nation - all these problems cannot be solved so long as India remains in bondage. To think of economic improvement and industrial development

before India is free; politically is to put the cart before the horse." According to him the appalling poverty, high incident of unemployment and low standard of living were due to the foreign domination. In view of all this he desired economic reconstruction and industrialization on modern scientific and technological methods.

Subhas Chandra Bose said, " The moment India is free, the most important problem will be the organizing of our national defence in order to safeguard our freedom in the future. For that we shall have to build up modern war industries; so that, we may produce the arms that we shall need for self-defence. This will mean a very big programme of industrialization." He felt the necessity of modernizing the backward agriculture which in turn would aggravate the problem of disguised unemployment and to remedy this development of industry would be indispensable to absorb the surplus labour from agriculture. He was much impressed by the exemplary success attained by the U. S. S. R. in effecting economic development through rapid industrialization within a very short period of time, and became a staunch protagonist for similar forced march like Soviet Union and not a gradual one as in Great Britain. Subhas Chandra Bose classified industries into three categories, namely Large- Scale or Heavy Industries, Medium-Scale and Cottage Industries. According to him, heavy industries are important for rapid economic development. In the category of Large-Scale Industries, mother industries produce the means of production or make other industries run successfully and these are metals, heavy chemicals, machinery and tools, and communication industries like railways, telegraph, telephone and radio. He was very much in favour of large-scale industries but at the same

time he never lost sight of cottage and small industries in an underdeveloped country like India.

### **3. Comparison between Mahatma Gandhi & Bose Ideology**

Both Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi were infallibly dedicated to the cause of Indian freedom. They were loved by the masses and feared by the Raj. But between themselves, these two icons of India's freedom movement shared a rather frosty relationship and history is replete with instances of trenchant differences between them.

Although Subhas Chandra was a follower of Gandhi during the initial days, the later part of the 1930s witnessed a growing radicalization of his thoughts and Bose became increasingly frustrated with the lack of momentum in the independence movement. As Bose started to assert his bold stance in various party forums, it led to a polarization in the Congress party ranks.

Bose found himself frequently at loggerheads with Gandhi and their differences often came out in the public. All these bickering reached a climax when Subhas Chandra Bose became Congress President for a second term in 1939 defeating Gandhi-nominated candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Unable to hide his displeasure, Mahatma commented " Subhas' victory is my defeat." But this unhealthy environment within the party made Bose's tasks all the more difficult and soon he resigned from his post.

Subhas Chandra Bose and Gandhi also disagreed over their visions for the post-Independence Indian state. Bose was influenced by the success of the five-year plans in the Soviet Union and he advocated for a socialist nation

with an industrialized economy. Gandhi was opposed to the very concept of industrialization.

In spite of all the differences in ideologies, both these great men admired and respected each other. In 1942 Gandhi called Subhash Bose the “ Prince among the Patriots” for his great love for the country. Bose too admired Gandhi and in a radio broadcast from Rangoon in 1944, he called Mahatma Gandhi “ The Father of Our Nation.”