

Role of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian Freedom Movement: An Overview

Pawan Kumar

Assistant Professor in History

Govt. College, Sampla

District: Rohtak (Haryana)

Abstract: We know the fact that Mahatma Gandhi entered into Indian Freedom Movement after the implementation of his theory of Satyagrah at Champaran in 1917. Nevertheless we can't ignore the fact that Mahatma Gandhi had shown a great enthusiasm after the Non-Cooperation Movement in the year of 1920. However, he turned into a non-cooperator of British Rule and he opposed the passing of Rowlett Act. The Jalianwala Bagh Tragedy compelled Gandhi to oppose the repressive policies of the British Government in India. Further, he demonstrated through Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 and Quit India Movement in 1942. Thus he became a popular freedom fighter of Indian movement.

Keywords: Indian Freedom, Rowlett Act, Non-Cooperation, Satyagraha.

Introduction: It is a well known fact that IIIrd Phase of Indian Politics belongs to Gandhian Era. This period was dominated by the personality of Mahatma Gandhi who introduced new hopeful ideas into Indian Freedom Movement. He deprecated the policy of violence and preached openly active resistance to British injustice. He advocated very fairly the adoption of the policy of Satyagrah and Non-Violence towards the attitude of British Government which did not look to the interest of the oppressive classes of

Indian society. Thus the Congress movement in India became a mass-movement of Gandhi. Reason behind it is that Gandhi played a vital role to strengthen Indian National Congress and he advocated the policy of Hindu-Muslim unity. But the great war of 1914-1918 gave a big shock to imperialism by advocating the principle of self-determination. Now Gandhi Ji opposed all injustice policies adopted by the British Government in India and he decided to start Non-Cooperation Movement.



The Non-Cooperation Movement:

Actually, the year of 1919 gave a great set-back to Mahatma Gandhi and he was disillusioned by the British policies. Now he became a Non-Cooperator after passing the Rowlett Act in 1919 by the Britishers. Gandhi Ji called it Black-Law and he freely opposed the Jalianwala Bagh Tragedy. However, he started this movement in the support of Khilafat Movement with a bang on 1st August 1920 after the decision approved by the Indian National Congress at its Nagpur session in Dec. 1920. Meanwhile the Indian National Congress outlined a seven point program of Non-Cooperation Movement as under:

1. Surrender of Titles and Honorary Offices.
2. Refusal to attend Government Darbars and Official Functions.
3. Boycott of Government and Government Aided Schools and Colleges.
4. Boycott of British Courts.
5. Refusal of all classes to offer themselves for service in Masopotamia.

6. Boycott of elections to provincial and Central Assembly Elections.

7. Boycott of Foreign Goods.

However, this was a very constructive program of Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Indian People were urged to develop the spirit of discipline and self-sacrifice. Now the Indian people decided to settle and their disputes through mutual arbitration and started to use the Swadeshi Goods. Thus Gandhi Ji implemented his policy of Swadeshi and the people were crucially enthused to work on the formula of non-cooperation. In 1921, about 30,000 persons were arrested and against the wishes of Gandhi ji, this movement went to a serious non-violence at Chauri-Chaura in Utterpradesh. Here a police station was burnt by the mob and a number of police officials were killed that is why Gandhi Ji suspended this movement in Feb. 1922 and declared that Swaraj had stunk in his nostrils. Subhash Chander Bose called it a blunder mistake made by Mahatama Ganhi and same remarks were given by



some of the others Indian Freedom Fighters.

The Civil Disobedience Movement:

Gandhi Ji reentered in to active politics in the year of 1928 and gave a call to Indian people for a civil disobedient movement in 1930 which was very different from the earlier non-cooperative efforts. He started it with Salt Satyagrah and on 12 March 1930. Gandhi Ji was supported by 78 followers and he started his journey from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi Beach to manufacture illegal salt. Subhash Chander Bose compared this March to Napoleon's March to Paris on his return from Elba. The Statesman of Calcutta sarcastically commented that Mahatma Gandhi could go no boiling sea water till dominance status was attained. Soon the number of advocators of this movement reached a number of 60,000. Meanwhile rapprochement was affected by the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact on 5 March 1931 and the British Viceroy declared that dominance status was the goal of India's Constitutional development that is why the Civil Disobedience Movement was provisionally suspended and Gandhi Ji decided to

attend the 2nd Round Table Conference to discuss the scheme of Constitutional Reforms of India. Now he returned home towards the end of 1931 and he was greatly disappointed and talked off resuming Civil Disobedience Movement. Therefore, in Jan. 1932 the British Government struck again and Gandhi Ji with his followers was arrested. Meanwhile Indian National Congress was declared an illegal political organization. Nevertheless, we can't ignore the fact that Gandhi Ji confessed the failure of Civil Disobedience Movement and resigned from the membership of Indian National Congress and started to work for the uplift of Harijans.

Quit India Movement: Now after the failure of Cripps Mission, there was a feeling of a frustration among all segments of Indian society. The congress which has done nothing from the Indian side and remained so far to embarrass apart from demanding a constitutional assembly to frame a new constitution for India. Now Gandhi Ji started his campaign for to withdrawal his supports from the Britishers and he started his campaign in April 1942 which turned into Quit India movement



in August 1942. On 10 May 1942, he wrote in *The Harijan* : ***“The presence of the British in India is an initiation to Japan to invade India. There withdrawal removes that bait”***. A fortnight later he wrote: ***“ Leave India in God’s Hands or in Modern Parlance to anarchy. Than all parties will fight one another like dogs or will when real responsibility faces them come to a reasonable agreement.”***

Consequently the congress working committee passed a resolution on July 14, 1942 demanding withdrawal of British Power from India and declared that such a wide spread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The All India Congress Committee Meeting at Bombay on Aug 8, 1942 approved the endorsement of the resolution of working committee and expressed the opinion that such events subsequent to it have given it further justification and made it very clear that immediate ending of the British rules in India is an urgent requirement both for the shape of India and for the success of the causes of the United Nations. The continuation of that rules is degrading and enfeebling India and making her

progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom and likewise the oppose of world imperialism.

Meanwhile at the early next morning on Aug 9, 1942, Gandhi ji and all the members of working committee were arrested and All India Congress Committee and the Provincial Congress Committees were banned but the Indian people did not take this action of the Government lying down. There were numerous act of violence and distraction of public property and in quite a number of places, there was a breakdown of Government machinery and dislocation of normal life and communications. Though the congress leaders disclaimed any responsibility for this outbreak of violence, it is hard to believe that all of them were ignorant of such large scale planning by the extremist. The general policy of British Government was to suppress the disturbance in India and to detained all the congress leaders until they gave a definite assurance and guarantee of a different line of conduct. Meanwhile the dead lock between the congress and the government was allowed to continue and Muslim League



demanded for a separation state as Pakistan which was opposed by Mahatma Gandhi till the freedom of India.

Conclusion: To conclude we can say that Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a new hope for Indians in 1919 and completely dominated the Indian Freedom Movement till 1947. He was an heir to the political tradition of both the moderate and the extremist and attempted not only a synthesis of the best in their thinking but gave it a more practical and a dynamic turn. This dichotomy between political and social work no longer worried Gandhi. He gave more stress on the concept of Swaraj and Ram Rajya for the benefits of deprived people in India; therefore, as a freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi had no peer. He was a saint politician who implied moral means for the attainment of political ends. However he started his all movements on the principal of non-violence but all of them met to a tragic end. That is why most of the scholars assume the fact that Gandhi Ji as a political leader remained no longer successful. Nevertheless we can't ignore the

immense contribution of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian politics and freedom movement.

References:

- R. Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989.
- J.M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, Yale University Press, London, 1989.
- D. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Non-Violent Power in Action*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.
- R. Guha, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri-Chaura*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.
- G. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997.
- A. Singh, (ed.), *The Partition in Retrospect*, Anamika Publisher, New Delhi, 2000.
- F.R. Frankel & Others, (ed.), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.
- Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Decolonization in South Asia:*



Meaning of Freedom in Post Independence West Bengal,
Orient Black Swan, New Delhi,
2012.

- V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, S. Chand & Co., New Delhi, 2012.
- Bipin Chandra, *History of Modern India*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2015.
- Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *A History of Modern India*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2015.