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Q3

How difficult would have been the achievement of Indian independence without Mahatma Gandhi?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS I · 12 marks · The Freedom Struggle

The Freedom Struggle - its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country.

Core demand of the question

- How difficult would have been the achievement of Indian independence without **Mahatma Gandhi**?
- Cover mass mobilisation, moral method, rivals and limits, and a balanced counterfactual
- Keep the explanation within a 12-mark length

Revision summary

Gandhi built mass satyagraha from Champaran to Quit India and a daily constructive programme.

Non-violence and a wide Congress made bargaining with Britain possible as a national claim.

War, INA, peasants, and British weakness would still have pushed decolonisation.

Partition shows his limits on communal peace.

Without him freedom would likely have been bloodier and less united, not unthinkable.

Flow diagram

Gandhi satyagraha -> Mass nation

War League INA -> 1947 transfer

Mass nation -> 1947 transfer

Gandhi satyagraha -> Did not stop Partition

No Gandhi -> Harder unity more violence

Conclusion

- **Answer as a counterfactual of difficulty, not as saint worship:** **Gandhi** lowered the cost of unity and raised the moral claim.
- State clearly that 1947 still had other engines, and that Partition shows his method did not solve every conflict.

Without **Gandhi**, Indian independence would still have been on the horizon because Empire was already in crisis, but it would have been more fragmented, more violent, and less able to speak as one people. He did not create the demand for freedom; he made its achievement less impossible.

Facts & figures

Champaran, 1917

Indigo satyagraha that took **Gandhi** from South African fame into Indian mass work.

Non-Cooperation, 1920-22

First all-India withdrawal from titles, schools, and courts, called off after Chauri Chaura.

Salt March, 1930

Civil disobedience that made the poor and the world see the Raj as unjust tax power.

Quit India, 1942

Do-or-die call during the war; leaders jailed, underground and peasant action continued.

INA and 1946 ratings

Armed and service unrest that showed British Indian force was no longer fully reliable.

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