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Q5(d)

Satyagraha and Indian Nationalism.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Indian Nationalism

Indian Nationalism: Political Strategies of India's Freedom Struggle; Perspectives on Indian National Movement; Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, Ambedkar, and the socialists.

Core demand of the question

- **Answer the following in about 150 words:** Satyagraha and Indian Nationalism. (10 marks)

Revision summary

Satyagraha is **Gandhi's** insistence on truth through non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

It turned Indian nationalism from elite petition into mass movements from Champaran to Quit India.

The constructive programme was the social side of the same nationalism.

Aurobindo's swaraj supplied an earlier complete-independence goal; **Gandhi** supplied the mass method.

Ambedkar held that civil liberty for Dalits needed law and organisation, not only satyagraha of conscience.

Introduction

M. K. Gandhi made satyagraha the mass method of Indian nationalism: insistence on truth through non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Nationalism in this form was a claim to swaraj that sought to include the village poor, not only a petition of lawyers.

Body**Satyagraha as method**

- Satyagraha treats the opponent as a moral agent who can be converted, not only as an enemy to be destroyed, which rejects **Hobbes's** war as the default of politics.
- **Champaran (1917)**, **Kheda (1918)**, the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), and the **Quit India Movement (1942)** were national applications of the method.
- The constructive programme - khadi, village sanitation, Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of untouchability - was the social content of the same nationalism.
- Hind Swaraj (1909) tied the method to a critique of modern industrial civilisation, so nationalism was not only capture of the colonial state.

What it did to Indian nationalism

- It widened the nation from elite constitutionalism to peasants, workers, and women in public action.

- It gave Indian nationalism a distinctive public ethic that later informed **Article 51A** duties and the language of non-violence in political culture.
- **Aurobindo** had already named complete swaraj; **Gandhi** supplied a mass technique and a village social programme.

Limits named in theory and in history

- **Ambedkar** argued that satyagraha of upper-caste conscience did not by itself secure civil liberty for the depressed classes; law, separate political safeguards, and Educate, Agitate, Organise were required.
- Revolutionary nationalists rejected the method as slow; Partition showed that moral conversion did not settle every communal conflict.
- Satyagraha still remains the main explanation of how Indian nationalism became a mass, mostly non-violent, anti-colonial movement.

Flow diagram

Satyagraha -> Non-violent mass action
Satyagraha -> Constructive programme
Non-violent mass action -> Mass Indian nationalism
Ambedkar -> Civil liberty limit

Conclusion

Satyagraha made Indian nationalism a mass non-violent claim to swaraj, joined to a constructive social programme. **Gandhi** designed the method. **Ambedkar's** civil-liberty critique and Partition mark its limits without cancelling its historical role.

Facts & figures

Champan, 1917

First major Indian satyagraha on indigo, a peasant entry into national politics.

Dandi, 1930

Salt march that opened Civil Disobedience as an all-India campaign.

Hind Swaraj, 1909

Gandhi's statement that swaraj is a civilisational, not only administrative, goal.

Quit India, 1942

Mass movement under the satyagraha tradition after the failure of the Cripps offer.