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# UNIT 1    CONTEXT AND EMERGENCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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Gandhi is widely recognized as the preeminent theorist of nonviolent civil disobedience, the leader of India's successful campaign for national independence and an architect of modern Indian self-identity. He never wrote a comprehensive and systematic political or philosophical work in the mode of Thomas Hobbes or Hegel, and the pamphlets and books he did write are extremely diverse in topic: they include criticisms of modern civilization, the place of religion in human life, the meaning of non-violence, social and economic programmes and even health issues. These works are constructed upon a series of concepts (*satyagraha*, *swaraj*, *sarvodaya*) which Gandhi elaborates into thematic strands. The Unit aims to throw some light on the unique context and the advent of Gandhi into a national leader.

The emergence of Gandhi played a pivotal role in the history of Indian Nationalism. He took the country by storm with his novel political ideologies centered on the cardinal principles of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. Armed with these ideological tools Gandhi shouldered critical responsibilities in the momentous events that finally led India to the path of freedom. The emergence of Gandhi, on the Indian political scenario was not the mere instance of another emerging new leader, but it was the rise of a whole new philosophy that permeated into every sphere of the Indian psyche. Gandhi's political ideals were merely an extension of his spiritual tenets, which were rooted in deep humanitarian values. Gandhi's greatness lies not only within pioneering a unique fervor in Indian politics and the rise of the masses, but in the way he revolutionized the entire way of looking at politics as an extension of mankind's inherent greatness, enriched with an innate belief in and commitment to truth. No wonder, he is revered as the Mahatma and has been immortalized as The Father of the Nation.

Thus by the end of the Unit you should have a fair idea of,

- context and emergence of the phenomenon of Gandhi and his philosophy;
- reading Gandhi with the complex nuances his work deserves.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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India's freedom struggle is a long and fascinating story. It is unique in the sense that it did not descend suddenly or abruptly like a bolt from the blue, but it matured and took shape in the womb of time for more than a century. Its revolutionary character consisted not in the quantity of bloodshed, but in the quality of the changes it brought about in the political system the socio-economic order of India. It was not a bloody revolution, but a peaceful one carried out with the unique Gandhian weapons of '*Satyagraha*' and 'Non-violence'. It was basically an ideological conflict between the emerging Indian Nationalism and entrenched British Imperialism. Its uniqueness is to be seen in the fact that the Indian National Congress which spearheaded the revolt against the British Imperialism was not a mere political party in any ordinary sense of the term, but it was a national liberation movement. As such it was able to inspire and attract different groups of people with diverse, even conflicting, interests and forge a united front to fight for the liberation of India from the yoke of the oppressive colonial rule. Thus the Indian National Movement provided a common platform for all the freedom fighters irrespective of their race, religion, caste, class, region, language and sex.

Gandhi appeared on the political firmament of India and imparted a new momentum to the nationalist movement. Jawarharlal Nehru has described the advent of Mahatma Gandhi in his inimitable dramatic style in his book "Discovery of India", he says, "and then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds". Gandhi's rise in Indian politics gave a new hope to the people. He filled the leadership void and dominated the Indian National Congress for about three decades until India's independence was won. He imparted to the great national organization a new dynamic spirituality for combat, which he produced by rediscovering the long forgotten strings of the Indian genius, and effecting a synthesis between the ancient civilization of India and modern western civilization. Under his dynamic and inspiring leadership, the masses of India stirred themselves and plunged into the nationalist movement. His identification with the common people of India in terms of their poverty, frugal lifestyle, culture, language and religious beliefs and practices as well as their dreams and aspirations for human dignity and good life was so complete, sincere and authentic that even the most stubborn and obstinate among them found it difficult to resist his call to join the non-violent struggle for the liberation of India from foreign rule. The non-violent non-cooperation movement launched and directed by him makes a fascinating story.

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## 1.2 CONTEXT

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The development of Indian Nationalism occurred in three separate phases. The phase of moderates and the phase of radicals, It was the third phase of Indian Nationalism that witnessed the rise of M.K.Gandhi. Let us have a brief look at moderate phase and the phase of radicals before coming to Gandhi.

**Moderates:** The early nationalist leaders believed that a direct struggle for the political emancipation of the country was not yet on the agenda of history. What was on the agenda was the arousal of national feeling, consolidation of this feeling, the bringing of a large number of Indians into the vortex of nationalist politics and their training in politics and political agitation. The first important task was the creation of public interest in political questions and the organization of public opinion in the country. Secondly popular demands had to be formulated on a country-wide basis so that the emerging public opinion might have an all-India focus. Most important of all, national unity had to be created, in the first instance, among the politically conscious Indians and political workers and leaders. The early national leaders were fully aware of the fact that India had just entered the process of becoming a nation. Indians had to be carefully welded into a nation. Politically conscious Indians had to constantly work for the development and the consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of religion, caste or region.

The Indian national movement up to 1905 was dominated by moderate leaders. They started constitutional agitation within the four walls of law. They believed that if public opinion was created and organized and popular demands presented to the authorities through petitions, meetings, resolutions and speeches, the authorities would concede these demands gradually and step by step. Their political work had a two-pronged direction. Firstly, to build up a strong public opinion in India to arouse the political consciousness and national spirit of the people. Secondly, the early nationalists wanted to persuade the British Government and British public opinion to introduce reforms along directions laid down by the nationalists. The moderates were never resorted to rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion or resort to crime.

The nationalists criticized the official policies for bringing about the ruin of India's traditional economic policies for bringing about the ruin of India's traditional handicraft industries and for obstructing the development of modern industries. They complained that India's wealth was being drained to England, and demanded that the drain be stopped. They carried on persistent agitation for the reduction of land revenue in order to lighten the burden of taxation on the peasant. They declared that high taxation to be one of the causes of India's growing poverty and demanded the abolition of the salt tax. The nationalists agitated for the improvement in the conditions of work of the plantations. Dadabhai Naoroji declared that the British rule was "an everlasting, increasing, and every day increasing foreign invasion".

The basic weakness of the early national movement lay in its narrow social base. It did not penetrate down to the masses. In fact, the leaders lacked faith in the masses. Describing the difficulties in the way of organizing of active political struggle, Gopal Krishna Gokhale pointed to the endless divisions and subdivisions in the country, the bulk of the population ignorant and clinging with a tenacity to the old modes of thought and sentiment, which are averse to all changes and do not understand change.

**Radicals:** After 1905, nationalist movement entered the second phase during that period, one in which Indian nationalists grew more vocal and radical in their demands. Boycott, resistances and demonstrations were their political weapons. They came to be known as the Radicals. Some famous Radical leaders were Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal.

The conditions for the emergence of radical nationalism had thus developed when in 1905 the partition of Bengal was announced and the Indian national movement entered its second phase. On 20 July 1905, Lord Curzon issued an order dividing the province of Bengal into parts: Eastern Bengal and Assam with a population of 31 million and the rest of Bengal with a population of 54 million consisting of Bengalees, Biharis and Oriyas. The official reason given for the decision was that Bengal was too big to be administrated properly. However the real motive behind the partition plan was the British desire to weaken the nerve centre of Indian nationalism- Bengal, on communal grounds by creating a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims. The Indian National Congress and the nationalists of Bengal firmly opposed the partition. To make their protest more powerful the *Swadeshi* and Boycott movement was launched.

*Swaraj* for the radicals meant “complete freedom from foreign control and full independence to manage national affairs without any foreign restraints. They hated foreign rule and had no faith in the benevolence of the British public or Parliament. They had deep faith in the strength of the masses and they planned to achieve *Swaraj* through mass action. They, therefore, pressed for political work among the masses and for direct political action by the masses. The radicals also affirmed their faith in passive resistance, mass agitation and strong will to suffer or make self- sacrifices. The radicals advocated boycott of the foreign goods, use of *swadeshi* goods, national education and passive resistance. However, the influence of radicals was curtailed as the British Government played the game of ‘Divide and Rule’. While suppressing the radicals, it tried to win over moderate nationalist opinion so that the militant nationalists could be isolated and suppressed.

Reconciling both these strands emerged the Gandhian phase, the third phase of national movement. Gandhi launched and encouraged protest of Government, boycott, *Swadeshi* a mass movement of non-cooperation. All these awakened the masses under his leadership for the first time on such a wide scale. This resulted in active involvement of people on national movement. He reigns in the hearts of millions of Indians as The Father of the Nation, for the path breaking role that he played not in the Indian struggle for independence but for moulding the national character and the lives of the Indians alike. At a time when the fabric of the Indian society was tearing apart, he accomplished the herculean task of unifying the nation. Confronted with diverse political ideologies like hard line extremism, the moderate approach and the newly emerging communist forces the confused Indians found solace in the simple philosophies of Gandhi. He worked assiduously for the upliftment of the downtrodden like the dalits and gave them a new identity. Women, under his aegis, found back their long lost confidence and actively participated in the tasks of national cause. Gandhi with similar perseverance championed the cause of the secularism. As a visionary, he realized right at the onset that the real strength of India lies in communal harmony and brotherhood.

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### **1.3 GANDHI IN THE INDIAN POLITICAL ARENA**

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Gandhi returned to India in January 1915. During the first year after his arrival, Gandhi did not take a public stand on any political issue because he did not want a plunge into Indian politics until he equipped himself with first-hand knowledge of the conditions in India. Therefore, in accordance with the advice of his ‘political

guru', Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he undertook a countrywide tour, giving as much as he received in the form of political education. This study tour took him to *Shantiniketan* where he met Rabindranath Tagore. Very soon, his name became as well known throughout India as the architect of *Satyagraha* Movement against racism in South Africa and requests started coming from various parts of the country that he should visit their place and help the people there in solving some of their local problems. Before embarking on the study tour, Gandhi had established the *Satyagraha* Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati at Ahmedabad in 1916 where the families which had lived at the phoenix Settlement joined him to live together as a community committed to profess, practice and propagate the message, values and disciplines of *Satyagraha*. Besides these, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Mahadev Desai, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Kishorelal Mashruwala and J C Kumarappa, Miss. Amtul Salam and Miss. Madeline Slade from England who later took the name of Mira Ben, also joined this Ashram as inmates.

It so happened that this year of enforced silence ended early 1916 at the time of founding of Benaras Hindu University. Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya, the founder of the university had arranged a series of lectures to be delivered by eminent persons who had come for the occasion after the foundation-stone had been laid by the then Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. It was Mahatma Gandhi's turn one evening, which was the first time that he spoke in public since his arrival in the country a year ago. Big leaders, English Officers, Rajas and Maharajas were present. Wearing a turban, the future Mahatma was looking like a peasant. As he started to speak, it appeared, as if Mother India was beginning to unfold her long suppressed tales of woe. Asserting that the poor of India were being exploited, he explained how the money for the jewels worn by Rajas and Maharajas was earned by them by sucking the blood of the poor. Ridiculing them for their women-like jest for ornaments, he advised them to sell their jewels and utilize the proceeds for the well-being of the poor. He made similar observations about the capitalists. At last he opened a scathing attack on the English as having started the exploitation of the poor. As some among the audience shouted, "Gandhiji, go on, Gandhiji, go on", the Englishmen, the Rajas and the Maharajas, the Rai Bahadurs and the Khan Bahadurs, all vacated their chairs and walked away. But Gandhi went on. At last the Maharaja of Darbhanga, a pillar of the British Empire, who was presiding, also left. As the chairs became empty, Gandhi a firm believer in discipline, despite the request of some of the audience to continue, concluded his speech. It acted, however, as an indication of what was to come.

Later in 1916, Mahatma Gandhi attended the Annual Session of the Congress held at Lucknow. This session, presided over by Ambika Charan Majumdar, was unique in many respects. It saw the re-uniting of the radical and moderate groups. It also brought about an understanding between the Muslim League and Congress for joint fight and drew up a Constitution for the Congress which had been without any during the last 30 years of its existence. However, by this time Gandhi had been able to enter into many hearts and reserve a special place for himself there. He had also become able to earn the title 'Mahatma'. All round the *pandal* where the Subjects Committee meeting of the Congress was being held, there was constant shouting of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". In this Congress Session, some persons from Bihar met Gandhi and spoke to him about the hardships the workers were suffering at the hands of British indigo planters. Gandhi gave voice to the cause of the oppressed cultivators in Champaran district of Bihar who were suffering under tyranny of the European indigo-planters.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) Compare and contrast Moderates and Radicals.

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- 2) Did the South African experience help in advent of Gandhi?

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**1.4 EMERGENCE AS AN ALL INDIA LEADER**

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Gandhi turned his attention to the grievances of the cultivators oppressed by the indigo planters in Champaran. But the District Magistrate served on him an order to leave the district immediately. Gandhi refused to obey the order and was tried for defiance. He pleaded guilty of disobeying the order, but he justified his action on the ground that human authority must yield before the higher authority of conscience. It was a new plea in a court of law. But not altogether so, for in the history, men like Socrates and religious saints and martyrs had taken this line to justify their action in the past. But for the British Magistrate who was utterly unused to such a procedure, the plea was staggering. His non-violent resistance provided a viable alternative in the struggle. The Champaran *satyagraha* forced the government to adopt the 1918 Champaran Agricultural Act, whereby those compelled to let their land for indigo cultivation were given some relief. What Gandhi left was carried forward by local peasants, with Champaran becoming a strong base for non-violent political mobilization, though the Congress leadership never allowed them to organize protests against the indigenous landlords. Despite the peasants’ failure to lead movements against the vested interests, the Champaran *satyagraha* articulated the neglected voice of protests. Gandhi emerged as the supreme leader and non-violence gained salience. This was not a subaltern protest, but one in which the subalterns were inducted into the process of political mobilization. In other words, the Champaran *satyagraha* represented ‘a battle in which many different levels of consciousness coexisted the complex perspective of the participants’. Apart from projecting Gandhi as a perfect mobilizer, this 1917 *satyagraha* also contributed to a unique multi-class political ‘platform uniting the clearly antagonistic classes for the battle against foreign rule. Not only did Gandhi succeed in containing the class wrath within a specific limit, he also created a situation in which the struggle against the exploiters coincided with the challenge against colonialism. So Gandhian non-violence, as

the Champaran *satyagraha* demonstrated, provided a potent means of legitimate and effective resistance within the new political dispensation in which the Congress was gaining in importance. The Champaran movement was a watershed in Gandhi's political life, not only in terms of conceptualizing *satyagraha* as a device but also in terms of its application to build a political platform regardless of class.

Similar to the Champaran experiment, the 1918 Kheda *satyagraha* was a Gandhian-led no-revenue campaign. Hard-hit by economic hardship due to the destruction of crops by rains, a rise in agricultural wages, the high rate of inflation and the outbreak of plague, the Patidar peasants organized a movement against the government's decision not to waive land revenue. Launched by Mohanlal Pandya and Shankarlal Parikh from a small town of Kathlal in the district of Kheda of Gujarat, the movement gained momentum as the Gujarat Sabha, an organization under the aegis of the Congress, extended support. Once approached by the Gujarat Sabha, Gandhi arrived in Kheda in March 1918 to launch a *satyagraha* campaign against the government decision to confiscate the properties of defaulters. The campaign lasted for four months and in June the government of Bombay decided not to implement the order, sparing the peasants who failed to pay the revenue. Like the Champaran *satyagraha*, the movement, spearheaded by local Congress activists, continued with local support. Gandhi's presence was more symbolical than anything else. Even his lieutenants, Vallabhbhai and Vitthalbhai Patel, remained insignificant in the entire movement, in which the local leaders became most important. As a cementing factor, Gandhi brought the *satyagrahees* together for the movement that had an agenda set by the local leaders in their own terms. In other words, Gandhi was important in the Kheda *satyagraha* so long as he agreed to support the demands of local leaders. This was evident when Gandhi urged the villagers to join the British army during the First World War and they refused.

During the Kheda *satyagraha*, Gandhi also participated in the Ahmedabad textile mill strike of February-March 1918. This was a different kind of experiment involving the workers. The successful campaign in Champaran had catapulted Gandhi to the centre-stage. When the workers in Ahmedabad became restive, Gandhi was invited by Anusuyya Sarabhai, a social worker who happened to be the sister of Ambalal Sarabhai, the president of the Ahmedabad Mill Owners' Association, to intervene and resolve the crisis. What triggered the strike was the withdrawal of 'plague-bonus' to the workers. Equivalent in some cases to 80 per cent of the wages, this was paid to dissuade the workers from fleeing the plague-ravaged towns. Once the epidemic was over, the mill-owners decided to discontinue the practice. This decision affected the workers adversely simply because of the spiraling price rise due to the outbreak of war.

Drawing on his belief that there was no major contradiction between capital and labour, Gandhi sought to defuse the crisis through dialogues with the mill-owners. The mill-owners appeared to be adamant and characterized Gandhi's intervention as 'unwarranted'. On 22 February, 1918, the mill-owners locked out the weavers despite Gandhi's repeated requests. With the closure, Gandhi decided to champion the workers' demand though he asked them to tone down their earlier demand for a 50 per cent wage increase to 35 percent. Although the workers agreed to Gandhi's suggestion, the mill-owners did not relent and workers seemed to lose morale. It was at this juncture that Gandhi began the 'first' of his seventeen

‘fasts unto death’ on 15 March, 1918. This three-day fast appears to have forced the mill-owners, who deeply respected Gandhi, to come to an agreement with the striking workers. As per the agreement, suggested by the arbitration board, the workers demand was partially fulfilled because they got a 27.5 per cent wage hike instead of their revised demand for a 35 per cent increase. So the compromise formula ‘looked like a face-saving formula and a tactical defeat for Gandhi’<sup>26</sup> though he forced the mill-owners to accept the principle of arbitration in which workers’ representatives had a say along with the employers.

A unique event in Gandhi’s political life, the Ahmedabad strike added a new chapter to the history of the Indian nationalist movement. Though critical of Gandhi’s obsession with passive resistance, *The Bombay Chronicle* appreciated the principle of arbitration as a turning point in labour employer relations in Ahmedabad in particular and a unique *system* of resolving industrial disputes in general. Similarly, *The Times* criticized Gandhi for blackmailing the mill-owners who happened to be his admirers by his fast unto death, though it hailed his role in articulating arbitration as an effective device to break the *impasse* between the workers and industrialists.

These three movements projected Gandhi as an emerging leader with different kinds of mobilizing tactics. What was common in all these movements was the fact that a) they were organized around local issues; and b) in mobilizing the people for the movements, the importance of the local leaders cannot be underestimated. There is no doubt that Gandhi’s appearance on the scene gave a fillip to these movements. Yet, if we carefully chart the movements, we will discover that ‘Gandhi was invited to lead when support was adequately mobilized by the local organizers. By his involvement with these movements at a stage when they struck roots in the concerned localities, Gandhi projected a specific kind of leadership: he was not a primary but a secondary organizer. There is no doubt that the movements gained different heights with his intervention. The masses interpreted Gandhi’s message in their own terms and rumours surrounding the powers of this messianic leader served to break the barriers of fear involved in confronting formidable enemies. As evident in Champaran and Kheda, Gandhian intervention in elite nationalist politics established for the first time that an authentic nationalist movement could be built upon the organized support of the peasantry, though its political object was not one which Gandhi endorsed. The peasants were meant to become willing participants in a struggle wholly conceived and directed by others, with Gandhi providing a national framework of politics in which peasants are mobilized but do not participate in its formulation. This was also true of the Ahmedabad strike where Gandhi accommodated the interests of the mill-owners even at the cost of the workers since their demand was partially conceded. Based on his belief that capital and labour were not contradictory to each other, Gandhi agreed to the negotiated settlements as probably the best solution under the circumstances. Workers failed to get what they had asked for. Yet Gandhi’s role was most significant in articulating a form of political mobilization in which the workers were also decisive. Just like the Champaran and Kheda *satyagrahas* that extended the constituencies of nationalist politics by incorporating the peasantry, the Ahmedabad textile strike was a watershed, for it accorded a legitimate space to the workers in what was conceptualized as nationalism.



These three movements constitute a milestone in what Gandhi articulated as nationalist politics. A leader had emerged to radically alter the complexion of India's struggle for freedom. With his involvement in mass movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad, Gandhi forged a new language of protests for India by both building on older forms of resistance while at the same time accepting the colonial censure of all forms of violent protest. Two complementary processes seem to have been at work: at one level, local issues obviously played a significant role in mobilizing the masses for protest movements in the localities; at another, the presence of Gandhi at a critical juncture helped sustain these movements as they were perhaps losing momentum due to the growing frustration of the local organizers. So Gandhi was a missing link that not only galvanized the masses into action but also contributed immensely to the successful conclusion of these protest movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad involving completely different constituencies of nationalist politics, namely, peasantry and labour. These movements appear to have set the tone and tenor for future movements which Gandhi was to lead, with the people at large participating in response to his call for political action. Although he was a secondary organizer in all these movements, he appeared to carry with him a magic wand that not only activated those who remained peripheral but also sustained the momentum of the movements despite odds. He emerged as a mass leader who felt the pulse of the people perhaps more accurately than anybody else during the freedom struggle. And the consequence was obvious because it was Gandhi who transformed the struggle for freedom to a wider nationalist campaign involving various categories of people including those who usually remained detached.

Gandhi led three major pan-Indian movements. The 1919-21 Non-Cooperation Movement was the first one that gained significantly, with the merger of the Khilafat agitation of the Muslims against the dismantling of the Khalif in Turkey. The Civil Disobedience Movement was an all-India movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme. Basically a salt *satyagraha*, the Civil Disobedience campaign manifested differently in different parts of India. The 1942 Quit India Movement, also known as the open rebellion, was the last of the three pan-Indian campaigns spearheaded by Gandhi. Like the earlier anti-British nationalist offensives, the Quit India Movement was not uniform in its nature throughout the country, and yet masses drew on Gandhi and his ideas while zealously participating in what was proclaimed to be the final battle with the colonial rule. Although these movements were organized in different phases of India's nationalist struggle, two features that recurred in all these instances of mass mobilization are as follows: first, Gandhi remained the undisputed leader who appeared to have swayed masses with his charisma and magical power; and second, despite their pan-Indian characteristics, these movements were independently organized by the participants, drawing on local grievances both against the rural vested interests and the government for supporting them. As examples from rural Bengal show, the message of the Mahatma was decoded completely differently by the people during the Quit India Movement. On occasions, they even justified violence in the name of the Mahatma. This was what was unique in Gandhi, who succeeded in infusing a mass zeal for participation in the freedom struggle in contrast with the past when the nationalist movement was narrowly conceptualized and participation was therefore highly restricted.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the unique features of Gandhi’s movements?

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2) Reflect on the factors that contributed to the making of Mahatma.

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**1.5 LET US SUM UP**

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Gandhi was the consummate problematizer of conventional ideas about human society. His creative intervention sparked off new debates on relevant issues involving other leading personalities holding similar/dissimilar views. For instance, instead of insisting only on political independence from colonial rule, he devoted a great deal of attention to purging Indian society of indigenous patterns of domination. Although he continuously drew upon the tradition while conceptualizing his ideas, he nonetheless challenged what he took to be its defects in order to reform it. So the importance of Gandhi’s creative work lay precisely in seizing upon the fugitive and supplementary forms of everyday life and in infusing them with a rigorous anti-disciplinary discipline which allowed them to no longer be fugitive, It is this extraordinary ordinariness that makes Gandhi’s socio-political ideas so astonishingly salient today.

Gandhi’s social and political thought is multi-dimensional. If its kernel is derived from India’s civilizational resources, its actual evolution was shaped by his experiences in South Africa and India. His political ideology was a radical departure from the past in the sense that it was neither the constitutional loyalism of the Moderates nor the Extremism of the revolutionary terrorists. In his articulation of Indian nationalism, he sought to incorporate the emerging constituencies of nationalist politics that had remained peripheral in the bygone era. Gandhi brought about an era of mass politics, though he dismissed the role of the masses in the early part of the Non-Cooperation Movement as nothing but mobocracy. Gandhi knew India, and especially the Indian masses. He could merge, argued Jawaharlal Nehru, with the masses and feel with them, and because they were conscious of this they gave him their devotion and loyalty. So, an analysis of the role of the Mahatma in India’s freedom struggle clearly indicates the changing nature of the movement in response to the zealous participation of

various sections of India's multicultural society. It was possible because Gandhi was perhaps the only effective nationalist leader who truly attempted to transcend the class conflicts by devising a method which, for the first time, brought about the national aggregation of an all-India character. This is where Gandhi was unique. Not only did he articulate the peripheral voices, he also translated them into action by linking with the obvious adverse consequences of colonialism.

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## 1.6 KEY WORDS

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**Moderates** : believed in petitioning and persuading British;  
**Radicals** : sought to boycott and resist through direct actions.

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