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GLOBAL STUDIES HGHS

documents on gandhi

Document 1

For me the law of Satyagraha, the law of love, is an eternal principle. For the past thirty years I have been preaching and practicing Satyagraha. The principles of Satyagraha, as I know it today, constitute a gradual evolution. ...

The term Satyagraha was coined by me in South Africa to express the force that the Indians there used for full eight years. . . .

Its root meaning is holding on to truth. Hence truth-force. I have also called it Love-force, or Soul-force. In the application of Satyagraha I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent; but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. . . . And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's self.

Carried out to its utmost limit, this force is independent . . . of physical force or violence. Indeed, violence is the negation of this great spiritual force, which can only be cultivated or wielded by those who will entirely eschew violence. It is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. It can be used alike by men, women, and children. It is totally untrue to say that it is a force to be used only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence. It is impossible for those who consider themselves to be weak to apply this force. Only those who realize that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be Satyagrahis. This force is to violence, and therefore to all tyranny, all injustice, what light is to darkness. In politics, its use is based upon the immutable maxim that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be governed.

And therefore the struggle on behalf of the people mostly consists in opposing error in the shape of unjust laws. When you have failed to bring the error home to the law-giver by way of petitions and the like, the only remedies open to you, if you do not wish to submit to error, are to compel him to yield to you either by physical force or by suffering in your own person, by inviting the penalty for the breach of his laws. Hence Satyagraha largely appears to the public as Civil Disobedience or Civil Resistance.

SOURCE: Adapted from Satyagraha in Gandhiji's Own Words by M. K. Gandhi.

Q-1A --> Explain in your own words what the doctrine of Satyagraha means. Give an example of how Gandhi applied it in post-World War I India.

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Q-1B --> How does Gandhi answer the argument that his method is the recourse of the weak?

Q-1C --> Why might Gandhi's political theory appeal to those with strong religious beliefs?

Q-1D --> Critics have claimed that Gandhi's methods were effective only because the British were civilized and respected his methods. Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

Document 2

Editor: If India copies England, it is my firm conviction that she will be ruined.

Reader: To what do you ascribe this state of England?

Editor: It is not due to any peculiar fault of the English people, but the condition is due to modern civilization. It is a civilization only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day.

Reader: Now you will have to explain what you mean by civilization.

Editor: It is not a question of what I mean. Several English writers refuse to call that civilization which passes under that name. Many books have been written upon that subject. Societies have been formed to cure the nation of the evils of civilization. ... [Even] English writer[s] have called it a disease.

Reader: Why do we know this. . . ?

Editor: The answer is very simple. . . . Those who are intoxicated by modem civilization are not likely to write against it. Their care will be to Find out facts and arguments in support of it, and this they do unconsciously, believing it to be true. A man whilst he is dreaming, believes in his dream; he is undeceived only when he is awakened from his sleep. A man laboring under the bane of civilization is like a dreaming man. . . .

Reader: . . . Tell me something of what you have read and thought of this civilization.

Editor: Let us First, consider what state of things is described by the word civilization. Its true test lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life. [As examples, Editor cites the organization of European life around the acquisition of things, and the assumption that when you have those things - for example, European-style housing, clothes, food, mechanization, and pace of living; transportation by car, train, and plane; and factory labor, where workers "are obliged to work . . . at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires" - you become civilized. He also questions, for example, the value of unlimited freedom of speech, the use of lawsuits for self-enrichment, and the "exploitation" of women outside the home and family. He concludes, "This civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion. (It) seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in (this)." He presents traditional Indian culture as "real civilization."]

Reader: . . . But it is also India where there are hundreds of child widows, where two-year-old babies are married, where twelve-year-old girls are mothers and housewives ..., where, in the name of religion, girls dedicate themselves to prostitution, and in the name of religion sheep and goats are killed. Do you consider these also symbols of the civilization that you have described?

Editor: You make a mistake. The defects that you have shown are defects. Nobody mistakes them for ancient civilization. They remain in spite of it. Attempts have always been made and will be made to remove them. We may utilize the new spirit that is born in us for purging ourselves of these evils. . . . The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is [Editor and Reader explore conditions for Indian self-rule. Editor introduces the concepts of soul-force and passive resistance through civil disobedience, and argues that it is the only method by which home rule can be regained.]

Editor: Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this soul-force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the force of love.

SOURCE: "Hind Swaraj" is the title of an essay written by Mohandas Gandhi in 1909. during his long sea voyage on the way to South Africa. The title translates as "Indian Self-Rule." The essay takes the form of a dialogue between "Editor" (Gandhi himself) and "Reader." "Reader" plays the role of a devil's advocate. In the essay. Gandhi put forth his basic philosophy, which did not change through succeeding events, and which motivated him to perform acts of great personal sacrifice in the interests of his people. Here is an excerpt of what he had to say.

Q-2A --> Summarize what Gandhi thought was wrong with Western civilization.

Q-2B --> What is the main point of the passage about the "dreaming man?"

Q-2C --> How did Gandhi respond to questions about the "evils" of Indian civilization?

Q-2D --> What did Gandhi mean by the statement, "History is really a record of every interruption of the force of love?"

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