

## Sample Answer

### Qs 3 of GS I 2015 UPSC Mains

**Q3. How different would have been the achievement of Indian independence without Mahatma Gandhi? Discuss.**

ANS:

In the 21st century, armed with the historical narratives at our disposal, can we dare to ask if the achievement of India's independence was a possibility without the input of the phenomenon called Mahatma Gandhi? Probably yes.

With the nationalist historiography according prime status to the exclusive achievers - Gandhi, Tilak, Aurobindo, Nehru, Bose et al have become the pantheon of leaders who have been worshipped for their contribution towards India's freedom struggle in the 19th and 20th centuries. Interestingly, at times historians of this school have been alleged to have been hagiographers; thus placing leaders of this genre at an impeccable position from where they seem unchallengeable and nonreplaceable.

However, the alternate historiographies in the form of the rebellious Marxist school and the 1970 - 80 era Subaltern Studies Group have provided the wherewithal to readers and researchers alike that freedom struggle was not only confined within the intellectual realm of the elite leaders who though were born in the subcontinent but shaped in the Western model. Inputs, sometimes macro and most of the occasions on a micro level, came from the tribal rebels, peasant groups, ghadarites, anarchist revolutionaries, socialists, Marxists and many other motley group of patriots with

disparate ideologies - but one common goal of breaking the fetters of the British Raj.

All noted, but can any historical narrative undermine 'the march of truthfulness' that was unleashed in the subcontinent from 1916 onwards - which ultimately culminated in 1947, freeing India in the process; not only politically, but socially and spiritually to a large extent? That was Mahatma Gandhi - with his political tact of avoiding the extremes, art of assembling diverse elements under one umbrella, strategic gameplan of struggle-truce-struggle and reaching out to the downtrodden as their 'own man'. Such uniqueness separates Gandhi from most of the rest and places him to the status of the Mahatma. Three well positioned movements, with increasing intensities - Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India, catapulted India to a free territory.

Political independence could still have been achieved without the Mahatma, since decolonisation was a natural corollary of the post-second world war era. Moreover, with non-Gandhian movements brimming with energy in India and abroad, independent India was a reality - sooner or later. Nonetheless, Indian independence without Gandhi leaves a vacuum large enough to be filled - who after all, would have bridged the gap of providing the trajectory of emancipation to millions of plebeians and made them feel that the independence was their 'own' and not engineered by a powerful elite from above?