

PYQ Vault

560

questions

50

days

10

years of PYQs

DAY 15

Indian National Movement · 6 questions

Every question carries a **Flow Snapshot** — and a handwritten model answer on the channel.

No PYQ will be unfamiliar.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 10 marks

The success of Mahatma Gandhi lay in transforming both political and non-political movements into a unified nationalist movement.

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 success = integration → Congress moved from elite politics to mass politics

R2 distinctive move = fuse political struggle with ethical-social reconstruction → means and ends made continuous

Body flow

political goals (Swaraj, Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, Quit India) tied to ethical / social reconstruction → non-political work (khadi, Swadeshi, removal of untouchability, village work) absorbed into nationalism → Khilafat brings Hindu-Muslim unity; Champaran / Kheda / Ahmedabad draw in peasants and workers → continuity of means and ends; freedom without ethical self-rule incomplete → **Pantham**: integral democracy, private morality + public freedom

Counter-view

M.N. Roy and **Ambedkar** → this fusion restrained more radical social transformation

Conclusion routes

R1 not mere mobilization but integration of political, social, economic and moral energies into one nationalism

R2 success lay in making the non-political part of the political → a single mass movement

Gandhi's success lay in integration. He turned the Indian National Congress from elite politics into mass politics by joining political and non-political struggles within one movement.

Political goals such as Swaraj, Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India were tied to ethical and social reconstruction. Non-political concerns i.e. Khadi, Swadeshi, removal of untouchability and constructive village work became part of nationalism itself.

The Khilafat issue brought Hindu-Muslim unity into the anti-colonial struggle. Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad drew peasants and workers into the national cause. For Gandhi means and ends were continuous and political freedom without ethical self-rule was incomplete.

According to Thomas Pantham, this amounted to an integral democracy that blended private morality with public freedom. Critics such as M.N. Roy and B.R. Ambedkar held that this fusion restrained more radical social transformation.

However, Gandhi's achievement was not only mobilization but the integration of political, social, economic and moral energies into a single nationalism.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 10 marks

Differentiate Moderate Nationalism from Extremist/Militant Nationalism in terms of their objectives and means.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 both Congress phases after 1885, anti-colonial → diverge on objectives (what to demand) + means (how)

R2 shared nationalist goal → split over scope of demand and method, not over patriotism

Body flow

Objectives — Moderates → gradual reform inside the colonial frame (representation, councils, rule of law, Home Rule) → trust in British liberalism (**Naoroji**: justice-loving British, reasonableness of demands) → Extremists reject the faith → Swaraj + national self-respect (**Tilak**: "Swaraj is my birthright").
Means — Moderates → petitions, prayers, memorials, constitutional agitation → Extremists → boycott, Swadeshi, national education, passive resistance + cultural / festival energy (**Aurobindo**: "political mendicancy")

Counter-view

Bipan Chandra → Moderate method not mere submissiveness → both phases predecessors of Gandhi's struggle

Conclusion routes

R1 parting at the Surat Split, 1907 → over method and pace, not the goal

R2 two complementary stages → together built the ground for Gandhian mass politics

Moderate and Extremist nationalism formed two phases of the Congress after 1885. Both opposed colonial subordination, but they differed sharply on what to demand and how.

In their objectives, the Moderates sought gradual reform within the colonial frame. The reforms included greater Indian representation, expansion of councils, rule of law & Home Rule. They trusted British liberalism. Dadabhai Naoroji held that the British were a justice-loving people who needed to be shown the reasonableness of Indian demands.

The extremists rejected this faith and demanded Swaraj and national self-respect outright. Bal Gangadhar Tilak declared, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it." Their means differed too. Moderates used petitions, prayers, memorials and constitutional agitation.

Extremists turned to boycott, Swadeshi, national education & passive resistance, drawing on cultural and festival energy. Sri Aurobindo dismissed moderate politics as "political mendicancy".

According to Bipin Chandra the Moderate method was not mere submissiveness and both phases prepared Gandhi's struggle. They parted at the Surat split, 1907 over method and pace but not the goal.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 10 marks

Revolt of 1857 is a 'Sepoy Mutiny' or 'First War of Independence'.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 two labels mark the extremes → answer sits between, not at either pole

R2 colonial "mutiny" reading vs nationalist "war of independence" reading → neither label alone fits 1857

Body flow

colonial / military reading → **Seeley** (sepoy mutiny, no popular / national character) → **Majumdar** (neither first, nor national, nor a war of independence) → **Bayly** (rebels shared no modern idea of an Indian nation) → nationalist reading answers back → **Savarkar** (war of liberation, *The Indian War of Independence*, 1857) → **S.N. Sen** (national revolts often led by minorities → narrow base ≠ no national meaning) → balanced view → **Metcalf** ("more than a mutiny, less than a national revolt")

Counter-view

against both extremes → not a mere mutiny (mass base of princes, peasants, artisans) yet not a modern national war (no pan-Indian consciousness) → middle position corrects both poles

Conclusion routes

R1 neither label fully fits → not yet modern nationalism, but the first large anti-British upheaval

R2 lasting weight lies in the memory of resistance → later strengthened anti-colonial nationalism → a watershed in modern India

The two labels mark the long debate over 1857's character and the answer lies between them rather than at either pole.

The colonial view read it as a military revolt. John Seeley saw it as a sepoy mutiny without popular or national character. R.C. Majumdar went further, holding that it was neither first, nor national, nor a war of independence. Christopher Alan Bayly added that the rebels shared no modern idea of an Indian nation.

The nationalist view answered back. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in *The Indian War of Independence 1857* treated it as a war of liberation. S.N. Sen argued that national revolts are often led by minorities and its narrow base did not deny it national meaning.

The balanced view holds. Thomas Metcalf called it "something more than a sepoy mutiny but something less than a national revolt." Neither label fully fits : 1857 was not however modern nationalism, but it was the first large anti-British upheaval. Its memory of resistance later strengthened anti-colonial nationalism.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2020 · 15 marks

Trace the role of militant and revolutionary movements in Indian national movement.

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 moderate constitutionalism failed to win concessions → militant + revolutionary movements gave nationalism its first language of defiance

R2 goal widened from reform to complete freedom → these two currents drove that shift

Body flow

militant reaction to moderate "political mendicancy" (**Aurobindo**) → **Tilak, Pal, Rai, Aurobindo** → *Swaraj* through *Swadeshi*, boycott, national education, passive resistance → *Swadeshi Movement* (partition of Bengal, 1905) = first mass agitation, beyond elite → **Sumit Sarkar**: revolutionary trend within *Swadeshi* → secret societies (Anushilan, Jugantar, Abhinav Bharat, Ghadar) + armed action → HRA → HSRA's socialist-secular turn → **Bhagat Singh's** anti-imperialism + rejection of communalism → women (**Pritilata**) widen the base

Counter-view

narrow, urban, middle-class base → individual heroism could not replace sustained mass politics

Conclusion routes

R1 courage + radical critique kept complete independence alive when constitutional politics paused

R2 not self-sufficient, but energised and radicalised the wider national movement

Militant and revolutionary movements gave Indian nationalism its first language of defiance. It was after moderate constitutionalism failed to win real concessions.

They did not work alone, but they widened the movement's goals from reform to complete freedom. Militant nationalism rose in reaction to what Sri Anubindo called moderate political mendicancy. B. G. Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Anubindo replaced petitions with the demand for swaraj. They pursued through Swadeshi, boycott, national education and passive resistance.

The Swadeshi movement triggered by the partition of Bengal in 1905, became the first major mass agitation, carrying nationalism beyond elite circles. Sumit Sarkar shows that a distinct revolutionary trend grew within Swadeshi itself.

That trend hardened into secret societies i.e. Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar, Abhinav Bharat and the Ghadar Party and into armed action. The Hindustan Republican Association & later the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, moved revolutionary politics towards socialism, secularism and anti-exploitation.

Bhagat Singh deepened this by combining anti-imperialism with a firm rejection of communalism. Women like Pritilata Waddadar widened participation. Their reach stayed narrow, largely urban and middle-class. The individual heroism could not substitute for a sustained mass movement.

Even so, their courage and radical critique kept complete independence alive when constitutional politics paused & energised the wider national movement.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 10 marks

Comment on the Satyagraha and Indian Nationalism in 150 words.

FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 Satyagraha = satya + agraha → central method of nationalism in the Gandhian phase → not passive submission; disciplined non-cooperation tied to truth / ahimsa / moral courage

R2 Gandhian phase made elite politics a mass struggle → a moral method opened freedom to peasant, worker, woman, student

Body flow

meaning (truth-force, refusal to cooperate with injustice) → Champaran / Kheda / Ahmedabad (local problem-solving) → Rowlatt (local method → all-India protest) → Non-Cooperation / Civil Disobedience / Quit India (mass nationalist form) → Salt Satyagraha (one simple issue unites rich-poor, village-city) → non-violence cut fear of repression → peasants / workers / women / students enter politics → disciplined anger blocked racial revenge → moral standing before the world → **Bipan Chandra**: struggle-truce-struggle / counter-hegemony

Counter-view

M.N. Roy + Ambedkar → method stayed cautious on class conflict and radical social change

Conclusion routes

R1 gave nationalism a mass base + moral character → social transformation left unfinished

R2 lasting worth = ethical self-discipline fused with practical mass mobilisation

Satyagraha - from satya, truth and agraha, firm insistence - became the central method of Indian nationalism in the Gandhian phase. It was not passive submission but disciplined non-cooperation with injustice. It tied national freedom to truth, non-violence and moral courage.

Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad showed its local problem solving capacity. The Rowlatt Satyagraha turned it into all-India protest. Non-cooperation, Civil-Disobedience and Quit India gave it mass nationalist form. The Salt Satyagraha proved how a simple issue could unite rich & poor, village and city.

Because non-violence reduced the fear of repression, peasants, workers, women and students could enter politics. It also disciplined mass anger and kept nationalism from turning into racial revenge, giving it moral standing before the world.

Bipin Chandra called this as a struggle-truce-struggle strategy of counter hegemony. However M.N. Roy & Dr. B.R. Ambedkar held that it stayed cautious towards class conflict and radical social change.

Satyagraha thus gave Indian nationalism a mass base and a moral character, even if it left deeper social transformation unfinished.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2025 · 10 marks

Explain briefly the role of Peasant Movements after 1857 and before independence.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 role steadily expands across the period → local economic protest → hardens into organised political action

R2 colonial agrarian exploitation breeds recurring unrest → freedom struggle absorbs the peasantry in stages

Body flow

early revolts (Indigo / Pabna / Deccan) → aimed at planters, zamindars, moneylenders, not yet colonial rule → distress enters public debate + forces colonial legislation → Gandhian phase (Champaran / Kheda / Bardoli) → peasant grievances tied to the national movement → **A.R. Desai:** mass basis for the first time → 1930s–40s (Kisan Sabhas / AIKS 1936 / Tebhaga / Telangana) → class consciousness + zamindari abolition

Counter-view

broadened the movement, yet Congress hesitant on landlordism → poorer cultivators left at the margins

Conclusion routes

R1 mutually useful but uneven partnership → peasants gave nationalism mass depth

R2 economic protest matured into political force → agrarian question pushed onto the nationalist agenda

Peasant movements after 1857 played a steadily expanding role in the freedom struggle. It moved from isolated economic protest to organised political action.

The early revolts were local and sought relief, not freedom. The Indigo movement (1859-60), the Pabna Agrarian League (1873) and the Deccan riots (1875) targeted planters, zamindars and moneylenders rather than colonial rule.

They pushed agrarian distress into public debate & shaped colonial legislation. The Gandhian phase changed their character. Champaran (1917), Kheda (1918) and Bardoli (1928) tied peasant grievances directly to the national movement.

A.R. Desai observed, gave nationalism a mass basis for the first time. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Kisan Sabhas, the All Indian Kisan Sabha (1936) and struggles like Tebhaga and Telangana added class consciousness and demands for zamindari abolition.

The relationship with Congress stayed mutually useful but uneven. Peasants gave the movement mass depth, while poorer cultivators often remained at its margins & Congress hesitated over landlordism.

• FORUMIAS •

PSIR OPTIONAL 2026

Programs Starting This Month

FOR UPSC CSE 2026 ASPIRANTS

O-AWFG Prime 2026

📅 Started · 2 June 2026

● ONGOING

O-AWFG 2026

📅 Started · 2 June 2026

● ONGOING

ATS 2026

📅 Started · 7 June 2026

● ONGOING

OGP Advanced 2026

📅 Starts · 14 June 2026

○ UPCOMING

OGP Advanced+ 2026

📅 Starts · 14 June 2026

○ UPCOMING

STRUCTURED MENTORSHIP • ADVANCED ANSWER WRITING • TEST SERIES •
PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Enrolment & Mentorship Queries

📞 93117 40432

Amit Pratap Singh • PSIR Faculty, ForumIAS

• FORUMIAS •

PSIR OPTIONAL 2027

Programs Starting This Month

FOR UPSC CSE 2027 ASPIRANTS

O-AWFG Prime 2027

COHORT 2

● ONGOING

📅 Started · 8 June 2026

O-AWFG 2027

COHORT 2

● ONGOING

📅 Started · 8 June 2026

ATS 2027

COHORT 2

○ UPCOMING

📅 Starts · 14 June 2026

BUILD STRONG FOUNDATIONS • MASTER PSIR CONCEPTS •
DEVELOP ANSWER WRITING EARLY

Enrolment & Mentorship Queries

📞 93117 40432

Amit Pratap Singh • PSIR Faculty, ForumIAS