

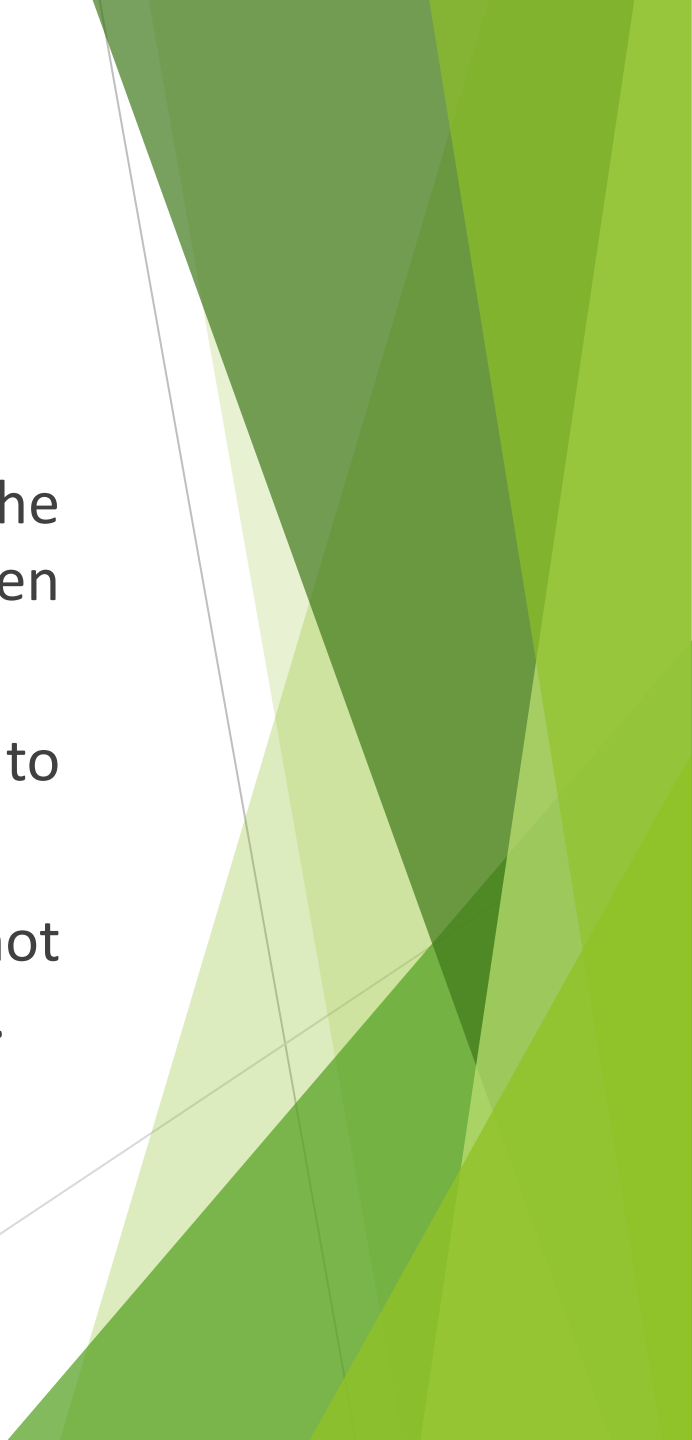
MAHATMA GANDHI

By
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- ▶ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as *Bapu* or *Mahatma Gandhi*, completely dominated the Indian National Movement from 1919 to 1948.
- ▶ That is why, this period is known as the Gandhian era in Indian history.
- ▶ No words are enough to describe Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to India's freedom struggle.
- ▶ That is why the grateful nation remembers him as the 'Father of the Nation'.

EARLY LIFE

- ▶ *Mahatma Gandhi* was born in 1869 at Porbandar in the Kathiawad district of Gujarat.
- ▶ His father was the Diwan of Rajkot State. In 1888, he went to England to study Law.
- ▶ On completing his studies, he came back to India and started practising Law at Rajkot.
- ▶ From 1893 to 1914, he practised Law in South Africa.


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- ▶ In South Africa, on a journey by train from Durban to Pretoria, he was forcibly thrown out of a first-class compartment, even though he had a valid ticket.
 - ▶ Gandhiji was hurt by the racial injustice and discrimination to which Indians had to submit in South Africa.
 - ▶ Indians could not travel with the Europeans and were not allowed to enter the hotels and clubs meant for the Europeans.

- ▶ Gandhiji soon became the leader of the struggle for justice in South Africa.
- ▶ During 1893-1914 he was engaged in a heroic struggle against the racist authorities in South Africa.
- ▶ He formed the *Natal Indian Congress* and suffered imprisonment. He started his non-violent civil disobedience movement to protest against the discriminating treatment meted out to the Indians.
- ▶ The South African government had to listen to the voice of reason and in 1914 repealed most of the unjust acts against the Indians.
- ▶ Thus, it was during this struggle that Mahatma Gandhi evolved the technique of *satyagraha* (non-violent resistance) based on truth and non-violence.

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- ▶ Gandhiji returned to India in January 1915 and spent the next four years in studying the Indian situation.
 - ▶ During the course of 1917 and early 1918 he was involved in three significant struggles—in Champaran (Bihar), in Ahmedabad and in Kheda (Gujarat)

Champaran Satyagraha (1917)—First Civil Disobedience

- ▶ Gandhi was requested by Rajkumar Shukla to look into the problems of the indigo planters, of Champaran in Bihar. The European planters had been forcing peasants to grow indigo on 3/20 of the total land (called tinkathia system).
- ▶ When towards the end of the nineteenth century German synthetic dyes replaced indigo, the European planters demanded high rents and illegal dues from the peasants in order to maximise their profits before the peasants could shift to other crops.
- ▶ Besides, the peasants were forced to sell the produce at prices fixed by the Europeans.

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- ▶ When Gandhi, joined now by Rajendra Prasad, Mazharul-Haq, Mahadeo Desai, Narhari Parekh, J.B. Kripalani, reached Charnparan to probe into the matter, the authorities ordered him to leave the area at once.
 - ▶ Gandhi defied the order and preferred to face the punishment. This passive resistance or civil disobedience of an unjust order was a novel method at that time.

- ▶ Finally, the authorities retreated and permitted Gandhi to make an enquiry. Now, the Government appointed a committee to go into the matter and nominated Gandhi as a member.
- ▶ Gandhi was able to convince the authorities that the tinkathia system should be abolished and that the peasants should be compensated for the illegal dues extracted from them.
- ▶ As a compromise with the planters, he agreed that only 25 per cent of the money taken should be compensated.
- ▶ Within a decade, the planters left the area. Gandhi had won the first battle of civil disobedience in India.

Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)—First Hunger Strike

- ▶ Gandhi now intervened in a dispute between mill owners of Ahmedabad and the workers over the issue of discontinuation of the plague bonus.
- ▶ Gandhi asked the workers to go on a strike and demand a 35 per cent increase in wages.
- ▶ The employers were willing to concede a 20 per cent bonus only.
- ▶ Gandhi advised the workers to remain non-violent while on strike.
- ▶ He undertook a fast unto death to strengthen the workers' resolve, but the fast also had the effect of putting pressure on mill owners who finally agreed to give the workers a 35 per cent increase in wages.

Kheda Satyagraha (1918)—First Non-Cooperation

- ▶ Because of drought in 1918, the crops failed in Kheda district of Gujarat.
- ▶ Revenue Code,, if the yield was less than one-fourth the normal produce, the farmers were entitled to remission. The authorities refused to grant remission.
- ▶ Gandhi supported the peasants' cause and asked them to withhold revenue.
- ▶ The authorities, not willing to openly concede the peasants' demands, issued secret instructions that only those who could afford to pay should pay.
- ▶ During the Kheda Satyagraha, many young nationalists such as Sardar Patel and Indulal Yaanik became Gandhi's followers.

GAINS FROM CHAMPARAN, AHMEDABAD AND KHEDA

- ▶ • Gandhi demonstrated to the people the efficacy of his technique of satyagraha.
- ▶ • He found his feet among the masses and came to have a surer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the masses. He acquired respect and commitment of many, especially the youth.

Gandhi's Concept of Satyagraha

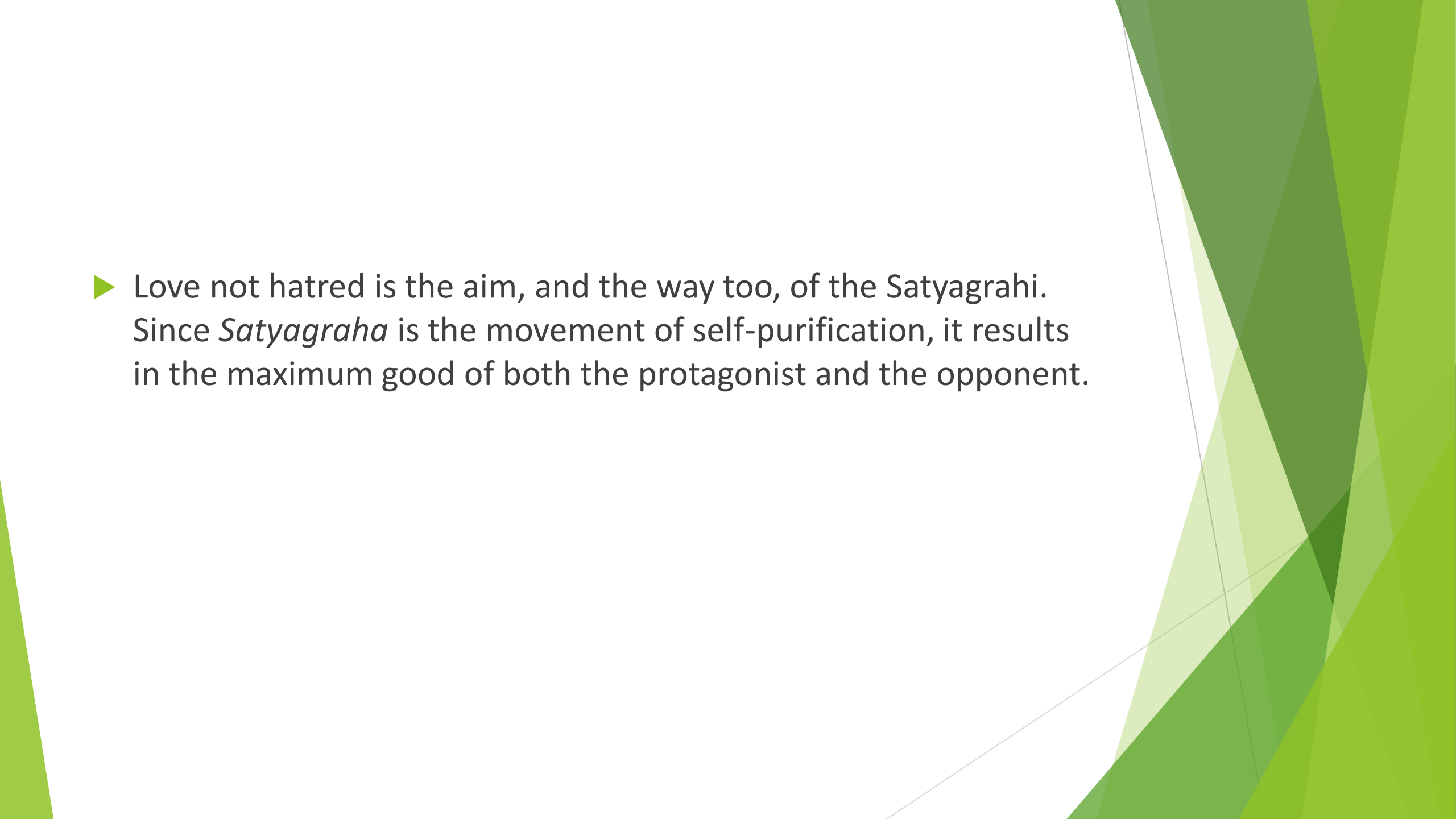
- ▶ The word *Satyagraha* — a combination of two words, *satya* (truth) and *agraha* (adherence, holding fast) — means 'holding on to truth'.
- ▶ It was a substitute for what Gandhi himself originally termed 'Passive Resistance'. Later he said that *Satyagraha* and 'Passive Resistance' differed as the North Pole from the South.
- ▶ The latter was conceived as a weapon of the weak, and did not exclude the use of physical force and violence for the purpose of gaining one's end; whereas the former was conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excluded the use of violence in any shape or form.

Gandhi's Concept of Satyagraha

- ▶ Love, had no place in 'Passive Resistance', but *Satyagraha* was 'the law of love, the way of love for all'. 'With infinite trust in human nature and in its inherent goodness' the *Satyagrahi* seeks the conversion of the opponent by self-suffering.
- ▶ *Satyagraha* did not mean 'meek submission to the will of the evil-doer'; it meant 'the pitting of one soul against the will of the tyrant'. Being 'a moral—not a physical—weapon', it 'raised political warfare to a higher-plane'. Gandhi claimed to be 'a practical idealist, not a visionary'.
- ▶ In his view, 'the religion of non-violence (ahimsa) is not-meant merely for the rishis and saints; it is meant for the common people as well'. *Satyagraha* had 'two offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance'.

Thus *Satyagraha*, as a technique of social change, implies the following:

- ▶ It excludes the use of violence.
- ▶ It is modest, ever-peaceful and ever-loving.
- ▶ Reasoned and willing obedience and respectful disobedience.
- ▶ Self-suffering as the way leading to self-purification and to awaken the higher self in the opponent.
- ▶ No man is beyond redemption.
- ▶ To undo a wrong, non-violence is the way.
- ▶ All life is sacred.

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- ▶ Love not hatred is the aim, and the way too, of the Satyagrahi. Since *Satyagraha* is the movement of self-purification, it results in the maximum good of both the protagonist and the opponent.

Non-Violence:

- ▶ An apostle of non-violence that Gandhi was, violent means in the sense of terroristic and militaristic activities like armed uprisings and guerilla warfare did not find favour with him.
- ▶ His *Hind Swaraj* was written subsequently in answer to the Indian school of violence and their counterpart in South Africa.
- ▶ As Gandhi wrote in 1921, "I came in contact with every known Indian anarchist in London. Their bravery impressed me but I felt that their zeal was misguided. I felt that violence was no remedy for India's ills."

Non-Violence:

- ▶ Although Gandhi was as much a product of the western culture as that of the east and was profoundly influenced by western thinkers and philosophers like Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau.
- ▶ He had realised that the Indian Culture and heritage had its peculiar features and any attempt at transformation of political, social or economic system of India must be in conformity with such cultural heritage.
- ▶ Hence the means to be adopted for the attainment *of Swaraj* should not be in conflict with the cultural heritage of the country.

Non-Violence:

- ▶ For him means and ends were interchangeable terms and the nature, quality and character of the end were completely dependent on the nature, quality and character of the means adopted for the attainment of the same.
- ▶ He was convinced that if the end is good and noble, it cannot be attained by evil and ignoble means.
- ▶ Hence in *Hind Swaraj*, while rejecting violence as the appropriate technique, he argued that it is as much impossible to win a noble ideal like *Swaraj* by the application of violent technique as it is impossible to get a rose by planting a noxious weed.

Concept of swadeshi:

- ▶ Although Gandhi advocated the concept of *Sarvodaya*, being a nationalist he believed in the advantages of *Swadeshi* movement for the freedom of India.
- ▶ Thus the freedom movement of which he was the leader, was inspired by *Swadeshi* as applied in the political sphere.
- ▶ The concept of *Swadeshi* urges people to adopt the indigenous political institutions.
- ▶ Accordingly the Indian political system should be based on ancient Indian Institutional framework, i.e., the system of village panchayats.

Concept of swadeshi:

- ▶ His belief in *Swadeshi* was the basis of his economic concepts as well.
- ▶ He emphasised that *Swadeshi* was that spirit within the human beings which urged them to the use and service of their immediate surroundings to the exclusion of those of the more remote.
- ▶ Thus one should use the products manufactured or produced in one's own country.
- ▶ *Swadeshi* did not mean opposition to large-scale industry but it stressed the need for reliance on cottage industries because as far as India is concerned only this policy could make India self-sufficient.

Concept of swadeshi

- ▶ *Swadeshi* as applied to religious sphere one should follow one's hereditary religion.
- ▶ This is the reason for his objection to conversion from one religion to another.
- ▶ *Swadeshi* seeks to inculcate the qualities of self-confidence, courage and the spirit of self-reliance among the people of India.
- ▶ According to this concept one should establish spiritual links with his/her environment as well.

Mass Movement

- ▶ The South African experiment gave Gandhiji the experience of leading Indians belonging to different religions, regions and social classes.
- ▶ South Africa built his faith in the ability of the Indian masses to participate in the freedom movement.

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Thank you