**The significance of Leaders**

Leadership of Gandhi

* Gandhi is one of the outstanding figures of the 20th century – this makes evaluating his importance difficult.
* He was similar to Jinnah in lots of ways. They both had a western-liberal influenced background. Where they differed was in their public persona. Gandhi was a public Hindu holy man who believed in Satyagraha opposed to Jinnah who preferred a constitutional political approach.
* Gandhi was from a middle-class background and trained as a lawyer at University College London. His first legal position was in South Africa where he experienced racial discrimination first hand. He witnessed the Zulu rebellion in 1906 and the extreme, violent reaction by the British to quell opposition.
* He developed a hatred of racism and injustice and developed his belief that the best way to fight back was with non-violence. He wanted to avoid the repression that he had witnessed in South Africa.
* He returned to India in 1915 and spent a year travelling assessing local conditions. He also promoted Indian self-reliance and social mobility – encouraging the building of schools, hospitals and clean water facilities.
* His first civil disobedience experience was in Champaran region. The strategy proved to be successful as it created a public-relations nightmare for the British who struggled to know what to do with the action.
* Gandhi became a national figure after the Amritsar Massacre. Gandhi is recognized as the person who transformed the INC into a mass nationalist movement after WW1. Until then support for the INC had come from the Indian elite, so for the movement to succeed in challenging British rule it needed to expand its appeal. This was Gandhi’s greatest achievement.
* Gandhi championed Satyagraha – ‘soul force’ - a form of non-violent resistance or civil disobedience.
* Gandhi rejected Western values and adopted the dress and lifestyle of a simple peasant. He created an ashram – a community of committed to non-violence and self-sufficiency using traditional methods. This appeal to traditional cultural values allowed him to connect to the mass of the Indian peasantry.
* He also identified with the problems of specific groups, earning their respect and support. Tenant farmers exploited by landlords, industrial workers involved in disputes with employers and poor farmers unable to pay taxes after bad harvests.
* Gandhi changed Congress from a narrow elite organization into a mass nationalist movement that incorporated all sectors of Indian society. This inclusiveness was not only based on class but also crossed ethnic and religious lines. One of Gandhi’s strongest source of support was the Khalifat movement – led by Mohammed and Shaukat Ali. Historians Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal describe the ‘courageous display of unity among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs’ that existed at this time.
* Gandhi organized a non-violent campaign in 1920 – it got out of control. He called off the campaign but was arrested and sentenced to 6 years but released on health reasons 2 years later. He abstained from direct political action until 1929. He withdrew to fast and meditate and involve himself in social programs to promote self-reliance.
* At this time Gandhi fought for the rights of the ‘untouchables’ and managed to negotiate some reform in the Caste system in the province of Travancore, allowing freedom of movement. Gandhi encouraged social integration and sent out a significant signal that post-colonial India would be a modern state based on the values of social integration.
* His leadership of the Salt March (see above) was one of the most publicized protest in the Independence movement – an excellent example of his effective propaganda.
* He was imprisoned and had gained nationwide support for his actions.
* Negotiation – he used his position to negotiate with Irwin and to attend the second Round Table talks.
* He was arrested again in 1932 – this sparked a huge nationwide response.
* Gandhi took full advantage of Britain’s involvement in WW2 to increase pressure for the ‘Quit India’ Campaign. He was criticized for not fighting against Nazism but he pointed out the inconsistencies of Britain fighting Nazism without giving self-determination to the Indian population.
* Gandhi has also been criticized for his attitude to the post-colonial state in India. India was a diverse population but 80% were Hindu. Many of the ethnic and religious minorities – especially the Muslims had genuine fear of being dominated in a Hindu led state. Gandhi has been accused of not fully understanding those fears. When Congress considered the idea of a federated state, where Muslims would have some autonomy in Muslim majority states Gandhi resigned in protest – making his feelings clear. This failure to compromise arguably contributed to the division of India – that led to considerable bloodshed.
* Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a Hindu extremist – Nathuram Godse – who felt that Gandhi had weakened India by upholding secular rather than Hindu nationalist values.
* In India, Gandhi is seen as the father of the nation. Although he was not the originator of non-violent protest, he was the first to use it successfully on a large scale.
* He became the preminant independence politician and a great social and spiritual leader – Mahatma – “great soul’.

Leadership of Jinnah (1876 – 1948)

* Jinnah was an important figure in the Indian Independence movement. He had a western education – studying at Bombay University and trained as a lawyer in London. In London he was influenced by British liberal ideas. From this he came to believe that gaining independence should be done by constitutional methods.
* He was a member of the INC from 1896 and became active in Indian Politics after defending Tilak after his arrest in Bengal in 1905.
* In 1913 he joined the Muslim League becoming its President in 1916 and playing a key role in the Lucknow Pact which brought the Congress and League together on issues of self-government to make a united stand to the British. Jinnah made trips to London in 1913 and 1914 – the latter as chair of the Congress deputation to lobby parliament over their proposed Council of India bill. He also helped to found the All-India Home Rule League in 1916.
* The next few years saw a decline in Jinnah’s political influence and success. In 1919 he resigned from the legislative council in protest against the Rowlatt Acts, and in 1920 he broke with Congress and resigned from the Home Rule League because he disagreed with the increasingly popular [Gandhi](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/mohandas-karamchand-gandhi)’s policy of non-cooperation with the British and aim of complete *swaraj* or self-rule. He remained active with the Muslim League throughout the 1920s, however, and in 1927 negotiated with Hindu and Muslim leaders on constitutional reform in the wake of the [Simon Report](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/simon-report). In 1930, Jinnah returned to London to participate in the first, abortive [Round Table Conference](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/round-table-conferences-1930-1932). In his short speech, he represented Indian Muslims as a distinct ‘party’ with their own demands and needs, and warned of the urgent need for a settlement that satisfied all of India, including its minorities. At the close of the conference, he decided to remain in England, despairing of the settlement of Hindu-Muslim conflict, he immersed himself in law, securing chambers at London’s Inner Temple. Jinnah lived in Hampstead during this period. He tried to enter parliament, first as a Labour Party candidate, joining the [Fabian Society](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/fabians) in an attempt to gain credibility, and then as a Conservative candidate – but he failed on both counts. He also failed to achieve his ambition of practising in the Privy Council Bar. He was invited by Wedgewood Benn to sit on the Federal Structure Committee of the second Round Table Conference, but played a very minor role there, with [Gandhi](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/mohandas-karamchand-gandhi), as the voice of [Congress](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/indian-national-congress), taking centre stage. During his years in London, Jinnah received persuasive requests from prominent leaders for his return to India to assume leadership of the newly formed Muslim League. In 1934, he succumbed to these demands, and returned to Bombay.
* Back in India, Jinnah struggled to strengthen the League’s position. In the 1940 League sessions, the Pakistan resolution was adopted by the party. In 1941, he founded the newspaper *Dawn* which increased support for the League, and in the 1945-6 elections the League was successful in securing the vast majority of Muslim electorate seats. Jinnah’s concern now was to ensure the best possible outcome for Indian Muslims after [independence](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/1947-independence-and-partition). He assented to the British Cabinet Mission’s proposals of June 1946 for groupings of Muslim- and Hindu-majority provinces under a weak Indian union government, but later rejected it when [Congress](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/indian-national-congress) refused the idea of parity with the League, and advocated instead the formation of the separate state of Pakistan. On 3 June 1947, Jinnah accepted the Mountbatten plan to transfer power to two separate states. On 14 August 1947, he was appointed as governor-general of Pakistan and set to work establishing a government and restoring order after the horrific communal violence that had accompanied the partition of India. Already suffering from tuberculosis, Jinnah succumbed to the strain of this enormous task and died at home in Karachi just a year the creation of Pakistan. He is remembered by Pakistanis as Quaid-i-Azam, or Great Leader.

Importance

* Responsible for the two-state solution
* Maintained the Muslim League as a significant pressure group.
* Supported Britain during WW2 and strengthened the League’s position in post-war discussions.
* Encouraged the ‘Day of Direct Action’ – communal Violence that was feared by the British.
* Debate over Jinnah’s aims – did he want to deliberately polorise the two communities to get the British to quit and divide India (Metcalf/Guha). Some Historians claim that Jinnah’s intentioans have been misinterpreted and that he was merely trying to ensure ‘an equitable share of power for Muslims’ in a united India and not create separate states (Bose/Jalal). Some blame Congress for not participating with the League and strengthening Hindu dominance.

Leadership of Nehru

* Nehru's Nationalism and his role in the Freedom Movement are closely inter-related, since it was the nature of Nehru's Nationalist ideas that dictated his course of action in the freedom movement of India.
* **Nehru's Nationalism**: Nehru's nationalism was not one of mindless jingoism. He was able to reach a common ground between an erudite internationalism and a very keen understanding of the Indian condition. Nehru's nationalism was marked by a fiery pride in the heritage of the country. But he was willing to temper this pride with his readings and his rationalist views that he received from his Western education in the West.

Jawaharlal Nehru's role in the freedom movement of India has probably not received as much historical attention as it deserves. That is, of course no surprise, as Jawaharlal Nehru's astounding success as a statesman who ushered in a new era of international relations through the formation of the Non Alignment Movement, and his stature as the first prime minister of independent India often adumbrate his position as a significant figure in the freedom movement of India. With his charm, highly impressive educational background, and selfless service to the nation, Nehru presented the face of a new and active India to thousands of Indians who looked up to him as a role model and a guide.

**Early Years of Nehru in the Freedom Movement of India**: [Jawaharlal Nehru](https://www.mapsofindia.com/personalities/nehru/) was born into politics. His father Motilal Nehru was a veteran Congressman and committed to the cause of India's freedom for a very long time. Nehru spent much of his educational years in England studying first at Harrow and then at Trinity College, Cambridge. However, the freedom of India was always on his mind. It was therefore no surprise that after his return from the British shores in 1912, the job of a lawyer was the last of Nehru's priorities. As a student he already felt himself closely attached to the cause India's freedom, and had his sympathies with the Extremist leaders of Congress. After his return, he involved himself directly into the political scenario of the country.

However, Nehru was still comparatively without a firm direction in these early years, not sure which path was the right path that would lead towards India's freedom. His father's moderate ideologies and elitist way of life disturbed him, as he thought him, like many other Congressmen of his generation, to be much dissociated from the ground realities of the land and the lives of the common people of India. He also realized that the direct application of Socialist measures would not suit India's socio-economic profile. It was at that time that he found a direction in the mode of civil resistance as preached by Gandhi. Gandhi's success in Champaran and Ahmedabad renewed and established his belief in Satyagraha. He was not slow to adopt the cultural aspects of Satyagraha as well. He read the Indian scriptures of India, and dressed in home-spun clothes becoming a staunch Gandhian in all senses. Motilal and his entire family adopted the Gandhian way of life. Nehru traveled across India, and was warmly received by the masses. This filled him with a renewed sense of self-confidence. It was time he decided to whole-heartedly commit himself to the cause of Indian freedom.

**Jawaharlal Nehru and the Non-Cooperation Movement**: The first big involvement of Jawaharlal Nehru came at the onset of the non-cooperation movement in 1920. Nehru joined in whole-heartedly in this Satyagraha based movement that stormed India. Nehru was arrested on charges of anti-governmental activities and was released a few months later. In the rift formed within the Congress following the sudden closure of the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, Nehru remained loyal to Gandhi's camp and denied to join the Swaraj Party formed by Motilal Nehru and CR Das. After his release, Nehru's fame as a dynamic Congress leader was well-established. He soon became the President of the Allahabad Congress Committee in 1923. However, towards the end of the decade, Nehru grew increasingly impatient with the pacifist nature of the senior Congressman. Along with Subhas Chandra Bose, Nehru was intent on complete freedom and believed in giving an ultimatum to the British Government to grant India dominion status. The senior leaders were bent on a slower and more patient approach. The Calcutta Congress of 1928 brought the rift into the open. Jawaharlal openly decried the Nehru Commission framed by Motilal Nehru, and it needed the intervention of [Mahatma Gandhi](https://www.mapsofindia.com/personalities/gandhi/) to persuade Nehru to abandon his fiery stance of more direct action.

**Nehru and the Civil Disobedience Movement**: The Lahore Congress of 1929 was monumental in the political career of Nehru as well as the history of India's freedom struggle. Nehru was elected the president of Congress for the first time at a young age of forty. He used the platform of the Lahore conference to declare the goal of complete freedom or Purna Swaraj. The Civil Disobedience movement was formally launched after the Lahore Congress, and Nehru whole heartedly plunged himself in the non-violent protests and picketing that took the nation by storm. Nehru was arrested again in 1930, beginning the second and the longest phase of his prison stays. On his release, he formed the Socialist party within the Congress and insisted on more stern and immediate measures to realize the goal of India's freedom.

**Nehru and the last days of Indian Freedom Struggle**: The Government of India Act of 1935 called for nation-wide elections. Nehru campaigned vigorously for Congress, although he himself did not contest directly in the elections. With Gandhi concentrating on the spiritual development of his followers and gradually dissociating himself from direct political action, the stature of Nehru within the Congress ranks was now more than ever. He became the Congress President in the consecutive years of 1936 and 1937. By 1938, the rift in Congress was clear. With Bose and Gandhi forming the two feuding camps, Nehru was once more faced with a political dilemma. However, he decided to side with Gandhi and his methods. Bose resigned as the Congress president, and Nehru's status in the Congress reached a height previously unattained. This year started a new phase in Nehru's career, especially after his denial to come to a compromise with the Muslim League.
* With the clouds of World War II looming large in the horizon, Nehru's skill in international relations would be tested once more. Nehru did not support Bose's policy of siding with the Axis forces, and intended to extend support to the Allies. In the meantime, the Second Round Table conference failed and Gandhi launched the [Quit India Movement](https://www.mapsofindia.com/personalities/gandhi/quit-india-movement.html) in 1942. Nehru was arrested and was released only in 1945. By the time the World War II was over and the new Labor Government of Britain seemed willing to grant India its long-deserved freedom. However, the British Government wanted to adopt a policy of waiting and watching the result of the general elections of 1945.

Nehru was once again at the center of activities. He was arrested. His refusal to comply with Jinnah's claims made partition inevitable, as Jinnah called for direct action. Although his fight for Indian freedom stood on the verge of success, Nehru knew his work was far from over. He had to build a new India and had to guide the nascent economy towards success.