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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Examine how Gandhiji's earlier experience in South Africa shaped the freedom movements in India, transcending through moderate phase to Gandhian phase. (250 words)

28 Mar, 2019 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Give brief description of work of Gandhi in South Africa.
- Highlighting his work in South Africa and Indian National Movement, draw the similarities between the two as he evolved a distinctive Gandhian methodology of protest.
- Give Conclusion

Introduction

- Gandhi returned to India in January 1915 from South Africa. The Indian struggle against imperialism took a decisive turn towards a broad-based popular struggle with the emergence of Gandhi on the Indian political scene.
- In South Africa Gandhi witnessed the white racism and the humiliation and contempt to which Asians, who had gone to South Africa as labourers, were subjected. He decided to organize the Indian workers to enable them to fight for their rights.

Body

- Gandhi organized mass protest against South African policies which discriminated against Indians such as legislation that made it compulsory for Indians there to carry at all times certificates of registration with their fingerprints, against restrictions on Indian Migration, against Poll Tax and Invalidation of Indian Marriages, protested the Transvaal Immigration Act
- Gandhi through his experience of organizing protest in South Africa learnt :
 - That the masses had immense capacity to participate in and sacrifice for a cause that moved them.
 - He was able to unite Indians belonging to different religions and classes, and men and women alike under his leadership.
 - He also came to realise that at times the leaders have to take decisions unpopular with their enthusiastic supporters.
 - He was able to evolve his own style of leadership and politics and new techniques of struggle on a limited scale, untrammelled by the opposition of contending political currents.
- As Gandhi took the charge of Indian National Movement, he slowly introduced his distinctive Gandhian methods of protest like truth, non violence, civil obedience, non-cooperation which he evolved in South Africa.
- Gandhi also brought women in to Indian National movement, during his organization of protest in Africa, as he was convinced of the inner strength of women.

Conclusion:

Thus Gandhi's faith in capacity of masses to fight established through his experience in South Africa. He was able to evolve his own style of leadership and politics and techniques of struggle for mass based from moderate based struggle of petition and prayers to gandhian methods of non cooperation, civil disobedience and persuading by attacking the conscience of oppresor.