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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Discuss the achievements and failures of Non-cooperation movement of 1920. How did it impact the subsequent freedom movements in pre-independence India. (250 words)

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Approach

- Describe the Non-cooperation movement.
- State its achievements and failures.
- Give conclusion

Answer

Introduction:

- At the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress. The programme of Non-cooperation was endorsed.
- An important change made was, until now Congress sought to attain self-government through constitutional means as its goal.
- In Nagpur session the Congress decided to have the attainment of Swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means, thus committing itself to an extra constitutional mass struggle.
- Gandhi declared that if the non-cooperation programme was implemented completely, swaraj would be ushered in within a year.

Body

Achievements:

- The non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi was a mass movement which had never been seen before and after the Great Rebellion of 1857.
- With the Non-Cooperation Movement, nationalist sentiments reached every nook and corner of the country and politicised every strata of population—the artisans, peasants, students, urban poor, women, traders, etc.
- This politicisation of men and women which imparted a revolutionary character to the national movement.
- The myth that British rule was invincible was challenged by satyagraha through mass struggle.
- It gave push to indigenous products thereby helping indian producers and damaged Britain's economic and commercial interests.

Failures:

- People from the middle classes led the movement at the beginning but later they showed a lot of reservations about Gandhi's programme.
- In places like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, which were centres of elite politicians, the response to Gandhi's call was very limited.

- The response to the call for resignation from the government service, surrendering of titles, etc., was not taken seriously.
- A section of the big business remained sceptical towards the movement. They seemed to be afraid of labour unrest in their factories.
- People had not learnt or fully understood the method of non-violence. Violent incident in Chauri-Chaura in February 1922 marred the spirit of the movement. Gandhi responded by withdrawing Non-Cooperation movement arguing masses have not yet learned to practice non-violence.

Conclusion

- Even though the Non-Cooperation movement did not achieve its stated aims but the strategic and leadership role of Mahatma Gandhi gave India's freedom struggle new dimensions.
- The biggest gain of the movement was that it gave a new confidence to the common people and taught them to be fearless in their political pursuit and made Swarajya an important goal.