

**Mahatma Gandhi Prior Knowledge**

1. Gandhi was born in India in 1869.
2. He had studied law in England before returning to India to live a life designed to be a model of simplicity and non-violence.
3. He abandoned Western clothes, preferring instead to dress in a simple cloth wrapped around his body. He was a strict vegetarian and ate only fruit and nuts.
4. He knows he experienced racism when working as a lawyer in South Africa where he was thrown off a train for trying to sit in a first class carriage and it was this that led him to focus his life working for civil rights.
5. He knows that before delivering this speech he had a lifetime behind him of agitating for change through non-violent protest.
6. He knows that in India, he promoted non-violent civil campaigns and in 1922, was sent to prison.
7. He knows that in 1930 he returned with his most famous protest, the Salt March. To show the world the injustice of British rule in India, he marched to the coast with a growing number of people to symbolically collect salt from the sea without paying any tax to the British.
8. He knows that this protest forced the British to recognise Gandhi as India’s most important leader. They invited him to London to begin negotiations on the Government of India Act that would introduce national elections and give more power to Indians.
9. He knows that by 1942, Prime Minister Churchill felt enough pressure to discuss a change to India’s political status. He continued to speak out that this was not India’s full independence.
10. Before making this speech, he decided that he would launch a campaign called “Quit India” to reflect his main demand: that the United Kingdom leave India voluntarily.
11. He decided to make this speech to the Indian people because he thought everyone should want freedom for India, and to help gain independence as a country.

**Mahatma Gandhi’s ‘Quit India’ speech (edited)**

Delivered to the All India Congress Committee and the Indian people on August 8 1942, on the eve of the Quit India Movement.

Ahimsa is a Sanskrit (an ancient Indian language) word which means non-violence.

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I am the same Gandhi as I was in 1920. I have not changed in any fundamental respect. I attach the same importance to nonviolence that I did then. If at all, my emphasis on it has grown stronger. There is no real contradiction between the present resolution and my previous writings and utterances.  
  
Let me explain my position clearly. God has vouchsafed to me a priceless gift in the weapon of Ahimsa. I and my Ahimsa are on our trail today. If in the present crisis, when the earth is being scorched by the flames and crying for deliverance, I failed to make use of the God given talent, God will not forgive me and I shall be judged unwrongly of the great gift. I must act now. I may not hesitate and merely look on, when Russia and China are threatened.

Ours is not a drive for power, but purely a nonviolent fight for India’s independence. In a violent struggle, a successful general has been often known to effect a military coup and to set up a dictatorship. But under the Congress scheme of things, essentially nonviolent as it is, there can be no room for dictatorship. A non-violent soldier of freedom will covet nothing for himself, he fights only for the freedom of his country.

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The Congress is unconcerned as to who will rule, when freedom is attained. The power, when it comes, will belong to the people of India, and it will be for them to decide to whom it placed in the entrusted.

I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle’s French Resolution while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal has told me something about the Russian revolution.

But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by nonviolence, there will be equal freedom for all.

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Everybody will be his own master. It is to join a struggle for such democracy that I invite you today. Once you realize this you will forget the differences between the Hindus and Muslims, and think of yourselves as Indians only, engaged in the common struggle for independence.

Then, there is the question of your attitude towards the British. I have noticed that there is hatred towards the British among the people. The people say they are disgusted with their behaviour. The people make no distinction between British imperialism and the British people.

To them, the two are one This hatred would even make them welcome the Japanese. It is most dangerous. It means that they will exchange one slavery for another. We must get rid of this feeling.

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Our quarrel is not with the British people, we fight their imperialism.

The proposal for the withdrawal of British power did not come out of anger. It came to enable India to play its due part at the present critical juncture.

It is not a happy position for a big country like India to be merely helping with money and material obtained willy-nilly from her while the United Nations are conducting the war. We cannot evoke the true spirit of sacrifice and velour, so long as we are not free. I know the British Government will not be able to withhold freedom from us, when we have made enough self-sacrifice. We must, therefore, purge ourselves of hatred. Speaking for myself, I can say that I have never felt any hatred.

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As a matter of fact, I feel myself to be a greater friend of the British now than ever before. One reason is that they are today in distress.

My very friendship, therefore, demands that I should try to save them from their mistakes. As I view the situation, they are on the brink of an abyss.

It, therefore, becomes my duty to warn them of their danger even though it may, for the time being, anger them to the point of cutting off the friendly hand that is stretched out to help them. People may laugh, nevertheless that is my claim. At a time when I may have to launch the biggest struggle of my life, I may not harbour hatred against anybody.

**Weblinks for further research**

* [BBC Bitesize videos](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zjkj382/articles/z4fwy9q)
* BBC – [Andrew Marr](https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks3-gcse-gandhi/zjxhy9q) talking about Gandhi’s campaign of civil disobedience
* [Kids Britannica](https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Mahatma-Gandhi/353163)
* Gandhi’s life, images and family tree on [Kiddle](https://kids.kiddle.co/Mahatma_Gandhi)