

Please respond to all the four questions. Each question carries twenty marks and the break-up, where ever required, is given within parentheses. Please structure your answers with the skills you may have acquired while redacting your self-study assignment. You might want to use a page for ordering your thoughts and remember to keep an eye on the clock.

Time: 3 hrs; Marks: 20 x 4 Qs = 80

## Question 1

Part A: What were the challenges that Gandhi faced on his road to the discovery of the charkha as well as spinning and weaving of Khadi. (5) Why was Gandhi unsatisfied with the *swadeshi* movement? (5)

Part B: Given below are excerpts from part one of “Final encounter: The politics of the assassination of Gandhi” (1980) - a study by Ashis Nandy. Nandy argues that Gandhi was assassinated by the forces of dominant orthodoxy acting through Godse because he had challenged traditional Hindu society. In what ways did Gandhi upset the traditional order of society according Nandy (10)?

“Every political assassination is a joint communiqué. It is a statement which the assassin and his victim jointly work on and co-author. Sometimes the collaboration takes times to mature, sometimes it is instantaneous and totally spontaneous. But no political assassination is every a single-handed job. Even when the killer is mentally ill and acts alone, he in his illness represents larger historical and psychological forces which connect him to his victim. [...]

Gandhi was neither a conservative nor a progressive. And though he had internal contradictions, he was not a fragmented, self-alienated man driven by the need to compulsively conserve the past or protect the new. Effortlessly transcending the dichotomy of orthodoxy and iconoclasm, he forged a mode of self-expression which, by its apparently non-threatening simplicity reconciled the common essence of the old and the new. However, in spite of his synthesizing skills, the content of the social changes he suggested, and the political activism he demanded from the Indian people, were highly subversive of the main strain of Indian, particularly Hindu culture. Even though a few intellectuals in his time thought so, many conservatives who had a real stake in the old and the established sensed this subversion. As his conservative assassin was to later complain, “All his experiments were at the expenses (sic) of the Hindus.”

Particularly dangerous to the traditional authority system in India were two elements of the Gandhian political philosophy. [...]

The first element can be crudely called a distinctive Gandhian theory of social justice. The theory rejected the role of the modernist, Westernized middle class intelligentsia as a vanguard of the proletariat. Till the advent of Gandhi, it was this gentlemanly class which dominated Indian politics and was the main voice of Indian nationalism. Gandhi, however, was always afraid that in the name of the poor and the exploited, the 'advanced-thinking', ideologically guided, middle class intellectuals would only perpetuate their own dominance. So the first thing he tried to do was to de-intellectualize Indian politics. I should not be misunderstood: Gandhi was not against intellectuals qua [as] intellectuals. He was against giving importance to intellectual activities and ideologies in a culture which believed intellection to be ritually purer and more Brahmanic, and where the primacy of idea over action had a sacred sanction behind it. [...]

As a part of the process of de-Brahmanization through de-intellectualization, Gandhi was constantly trying to pass off many aspects of the low-status, non-Brahmanic, commercial, and peasant cultures in India as genuine Hinduism. While stressing the 'syntheticism' of Gandhi, one must not ignore his attempt to make certain peripheral aspects of the Hindu culture its central core, exactly the way he tried to do with Christianity in a more limited way.

To effect this cultural restructuring Gandhi evolved what for his society was a new political technology. He began emphasizing the centrality of politics and public life in an apolitical society and mobilizing the periphery of the Hindu society, apparently for the nationalist cause so dear to the urban middle classes, but actually to remould the entire cultural strata [stratified hierarchy] within Hinduism. It is thus that Gandhi bridged the pre-Gandhian hiatus that had arisen between mass politics and social reform movements in India. [...]

The second major element in Gandhi's philosophy was his rediscovery of womanhood as a civilizing force in human society. Gandhi tried to give a new meaning to womanhood in a peasant culture, which had lived through centuries with deep-seated conflicts and ambivalence about femininity. [...] The Indian had always feared woman as the traditional symbol of uncertain nature and unpredictable nurture, of activity, power, and aggression. In consequence, he had always feared womanhood

and either abnegated femininity or defensively glorified it out of all proportions. As in many such cases, here too an internal psychological problem had its counterpart in cultural divisions within the Indian society. The greater Sanskrit culture tended to give less importance to a woman and to value her less in comparison to the little cultures of India. Simultaneously, the colonial culture too derived its psychological strength from the identification of ruler-ship with male dominance and subjecthood with feminine submissiveness.

It would therefore seem that Gandhi's innovations in this area also tended to simultaneously subvert Brahmanic and Kshatriya orthodoxy and the British colonial system. He challenged the former so far as it depended upon the Indian man's fears of being polluted by a woman and contaminated by her femininity; he challenged the latter in so far as it exploited man's insecurity about his masculinity and his consequent continuous potency drive.

In other words, Gandhi attacked the structure of sexual dominance as a homologue [comparable position] of both the colonial situation and the traditional social stratification. He rejected the British as well as the Brahmanic-Kshatriya equation between manhood and dominance, between masculinity and legitimate violence, and between femininity and passive submissiveness. He wanted to extend to the male identity –in both the rulers and the ruled- the revalued, partly non-Brahmanic, equation between womanhood and non-intrusive, nurturant, non-manipulative, non-violent, self-de-emphasizing 'merger' with natural and social environments. [...]

These two basic constructions -centrality of the periphery of Indian culture and acceptance of femininity- Gandhi pronounced not through written or spoken words, a form of dissent for which there was legitimacy in the Brahmanic culture. His means were large-scale mobilization, organizational activism, and constant demands on the Indians for conformity to an internally consistent public ethic. These means were largely alien to the Brahmanic culture which was tolerant of –and self-confident vis-à-vis- ideological dissent but became insecure when ideological dissent was supported by such low status, non-Brahmanic means as active social intervention and mass politics.

In spite of erecting this elaborate and magnificent structure of dissent, Gandhi never claimed he was a revolutionary or a reformer, someone consciously

reinterpreting traditional texts to justify new modes of life, as many social reformers in India had previously done. He was convinced that he was a *sanatani* Hindu, a genuine, orthodox, full-blooded Indian, not a social reformer out to alter Hinduism and Indian culture. He was, he seemed to argue, a counter-reformist, a revivalist, and a committed traditionalist. According to him, he represented continuity and the Brahmanic, educated, westernized middle classes represented change. He was, he claimed, the insider; the upper echelons of the Hindu society, the Brahmanic cognoscenti, were the interlopers. And again, not only did Gandhi indulge in this 'inner speech', he went on to give it institutional forms. He mobilized the numerically preponderant non-Brahmanic sectors of the Hindus, the lower strata of society, and the politically passive peripheries: the low castes and untouchables, the peasants and the villagers. Taking advantage of numbers, he began legitimizing a new collective ethic that threatened to challenge the traditional Indian concepts of individual salvation, responsibility, and action geared to the value of self-awareness; the concepts of private knowledge and self-knowledge; political non-participation and the belief that the political authorities were not central to life.

### **Question 2**

Outline Gandhi's critique of the parliament, the railways, the legal, medical and educational systems in the *Hind Swaraj* (10). Please list any five arguments that you consider to be weakest in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* with at least one reason each, for explaining why you consider the corresponding argument to be so (10).

### **Question 3**

Narayan Desai, son of Mahadev Desai, has described how during one of Kasturba and Gandhi's journeys, at Katni railway station in 1941, suddenly, their eldest son Harilal appeared in rags, looking old and ill and shouted "Mata Kasturba ki jai" while the crowd was shouting "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai". He was emaciated - Desai writes - his front teeth were gone. His hair turned gray. From the pocket of his ragged clothes, he took out an orange and said, "Ba, I have brought for you." Breaking in, Bapu said, "Didn't you bring anything for me?" "No nothing for you. I only want to tell you that all the greatness you have achieved is because of Ba. Don't forget that." Ba promised to eat the orange. Then she pleaded with Harilalkaka to come with us. Harilalkaka's eyes were full of tears. "Leave off such talk, Ba. There's no way out of this for me."

As the train pulled away, Kasturba remembered that neither she nor anyone else had offered Harilal anything. “He must be dying of hunger,” Kasturba said. From outside the compartment amidst cries of “Gandhiji ki jai” another faint cry could also be heard, “Mata Kasturba ki jai.” Using this anecdote as a cue, write an essay on Gandhi the man: as son, as friend, as husband, as nurse, as mother... Your assessment should be analytically rigorous and based on verifiable facts.



#### **Question 4**

The photograph given above is of an indigo farm courtesy [www.oldindianphotos.in](http://www.oldindianphotos.in) and has a commemorative value in 2017 as this year is the centenary of the Champaran satyagraha. Write an essay on the Champaran satyagraha under the following headings: its significance; the problem and the temporal-spatial coordinates; actors involved including Gandhi's role; and how the problem was resolved, if at all (20 marks).