**Indian Freedom Struggle – Strategies**

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**1. Ahmedabad Textile Laborers Win Strike**

Time: February-March 1918

Goal: To increase wages for textile laborers.

In 1917 a terrible **monsoon** hit the town of Ahmedabad. Crops were destroyed and a **plague** killed nearly 10% of the population. In order to keep the textile workers from leaving, employers gave out ‘plague bonuses’. The bonuses were for as much as 80% of workers’ normal **wages**. When the plague lessened employers announced that they would stop giving out those bonuses. At the same time prices for food and clothing went up because of World War 1. Workers demanded an increase in their wages so that they could keep living as they had been when they’d gotten bonuses.

The relationship between the workers and employers got worse when workers went on **strike**; the employers just fired the striking workers and hired people from elsewhere. Frustrated workers sought the help of a social worker named Anusuyya Sarabhai. She helped the workers fight for economic justice. She also encouraged Mohandas Gandhi to help resolve the conflict between the workers and employers. Gandhi suggested they **negotiate** and find a solution.

The employers and works both chose someone to represent their side. Then employers decided not to participate because workers went on strike. Gandhi attempted to get the two sides to talk; he failed because there was so much distrust. On February 22, 1918 the employers locked everyone out of the factories. They said no one could work unless the workers accepted a 20% increase in their wages. Some accepted; Gandhi encouraged the workers to keep fighting for a fair wage.

Gandhi calculated that a 35% increase in wages was fair. He based this number on the working conditions in the factories, the wages paid in another city, the increase in the cost of food and clothing, and the poor living conditions. Workers agreed that a 35% increase was fair but the employers did not. Gandhi and the workers decided to do a peaceful strike until they got a 35% pay increase.

Workers held daily meetings and passed out **pamphlets** with information about the strike and fair wages. Songs were written about the strike because many workers could not read. The employers also handed out pamphlets trying to discourage the workers and stop the strike. This got the attention of the public.

Gandhi and other leaders continued to support the workers during the strike. Striking workers received lessons in sanitation and medical assistance. They created the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association in 1920. Some got jobs building a weaving school. Others, however, found the work too difficult and lost patience and confidence in the strike.

Gandhi saw the workers lose **morale** and decided to **fast**. On the third day of his fast the employers agreed to give the workers what they wanted as long as Gandhi stopped helping the workers. Gandhi refused and suggested they get a third person help resolve the issue. A solution was agreed upon and Gandhi stopped fasting on March 18, 1918. The employers offered sweets to the workers to show their appreciation and workers made speeches to show their gratitude.

The next day the workers returned to work. They got a 35% increase in wages for that day, a 20% increase on the second day, and a 27.5% increase after that until an exact percent was agreed upon. Finally a wage increase of 35% was agreed upon. The whole disagreement lasted 25 days. Establishing the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association helped to improve the working conditions. It also led to more union organization in India.

**2. Vykom Untouchables Campaign for Human Rights**

Time: 1924-25

Goals: To allow **Untouchables** to use temple roads.

The traditional Hindu **caste system** is a **hierarchy** where some people have more power than others. The Untouchables had the least power, were discriminated against, and were sometimes the victims of violence. Mohandas Gandhi believed that there should be no discrimination. He promoted peaceful **resistance** against discrimination.

One way the Untouchables were discriminated against was that they weren’t allowed to touch or use anything the upper caste people used. Untouchables couldn’t use certain roads that led to Hindu temples. Some untouchables in Vykom decided to break this rule. They organized a march down one of the restricted roads. Some of the upper caste people were violent against the marching Untouchables. The police **barricaded** the road so the Untouchables could not use it. Some Untouchables took turns standing at the barricade as a form of protest.

After months of this the police took down the barricade so the Untouchables could use the road. However, the Untouchables refused and stayed put. They said they would wait there until the people of the upper caste invited the Untouchables to use the road. Sixteen months after the Untouchables started their protest the upper caste changed their mind. The Untouchables were invited to use the road to the temple.

These events encouraged Untouchables all over India to stand up for their freedom. When India became a free country its constitution prohibited discrimination against Untouchables. Discrimination still exists in India but Untouchables continue to make progress.

**3. Indians Campaign for Independence**

Time: 1930-31

Goals: To gain independence from Britain, to decrease dependence on foreign products, and to build unity among Hindus and Muslims of all social classes.

India had attempted to gain independence from Britain from 1919-1922. These efforts became violent and unorganized. Mohandas Gandhi decided to try another peaceful way to gain independence. He targeted the British Salt Act written in 1882. This law stated that the British were the only ones allowed to collect and **manufacture** salt. The British were also allowed to collect a tax on salt. Gandhi told the people of India to make and sell their own salt. He thought this would challenge the British authority. He also thought it would unite the people of India because they all used salt.

Gandhi planned a 240-mile march. At the end of the march he would publicly break the Salt Law. He contacted American, European and Indian media to draw attention to the march. Before the march he offered to call it off if the British agreed to talk. The British refused so Gandhi moved forward with the march.

On March 12 1930 Gandhi and many others began the 24-day march. They stopped in villages and spoke out against the Salt Laws. They encouraged people to break the law and to boycott other foreign goods. On April 51930 they reached the shores of Dandi. The next day an Indian leader picked up a clump of mud and salt. This symbolized his protests against the Salt Laws. Many others did the same thing. They made salt, bought it illegally, or refused to pay tax on it.

Next Gandhi threatened to lead a raid on the salt works in Dharasana. Again he offered to call it off if the British agreed to his demands. Instead the British arrested Gandhi and others who were going to participate. Many still participated in the non-violent raid but were beaten and arrested. The American and European media reported on the peaceful protest that the British responded to with violence.

Indians increased their efforts. Meanwhile the British imposed a curfew, banned marches and gatherings, and took property. They also arrested, beat and shot protesters. In a few cases, the protesters acted violently. The British arrested over 60,000 people but Indians began to take pride in being jailed.

In 1930 **civil disobedience** began to die down. Many wanted India and Britain to come to an agreement. In January of 1931 the Indian constitution was changed. Also many people were released from jail, including Gandhi. Gandhi and a British leader met and debated a number of points. They made some compromises: the protests would end and prisoners would be released. Indians could get their jobs back but farmers could not get back land that had been taken. The Salt Laws were not changed but Britain agreed to allow people to make salt for personal use.

Many people in India were not happy with the compromises. Some continued to protest in different ways. In August 1931 Gandhi went to Britain to discuss Indian independence. These talks failed and Gandhi tried to **revive** the civil disobedience movement. The British passed laws and arrested people to stop the protests before they really started. Even though the Salt Laws weren’t changed, these events were important because they diminished British rule in India.

**3. Indians Campaign for Full Independence**

Time: July 1942-March 1943

Goals: To end British rule in India

In 1942 the British offered India partial independence. The British wanted India to support their efforts in World War 2 in return. The Indian National Congress (INC) did not agree with this proposal. The INC wanted more independence and a timeframe for when they would be able to rule themselves. The INC rejected the offer.

Mohandas Gandhi campaigned against the war. He fought for Indian independence. He wrote articles in local newspapers encouraging people to rise up. The INC made the ‘Quit India’ Resolution in July of 1942. The resolution stated that ending British rule in India was urgent. It demanded complete independence for India. Indians threatened civil disobedience if their demands weren’t met.

The All Indian Congress Committee (AICC) met in August of 1942. Gandhi encouraged the people to act as an independent nation. He also urged the people to do nonviolent civil disobedience. The police responded with violence. Gandhi and others were arrested. After Gandhi’s arrest the AICC was called unlawful. The people of India too notice, however. There were demonstrations and strikes. Students stopped going school so that they could march with the workers. Some cut phone and electrical wires. Others broke train tracks. And others broke into the jail and released the prisoners.

The protests weren’t organized and some became violent. Nine people died during protests in Bombay. Then protests spread across parts of India and became more violent. Police shot and killed 24 people in the first two days. The violence continued and police and army killed hundreds of protesters and innocent people. Some nonviolent protesters blocked a train track and were killed by British Air Force planes with machine guns.

Tensions from the fear of violence continued. People raided government buildings and set fire to post offices, train stations and police stations. During one protest, people threw bombs at police. The violent protests left a lot of destruction in India. Over 100 police stations were burned down. Police responded by arresting over 100,000 protesters. Marching and assembling was made illegal.

Since many male leaders were in prison women took on leadership roles. Women secretly organized protests, wrote and distributed information, collected weapons and money, and helped hide protesters wanted for arrest. Some women organized marches and flag raising events. A 15-year old girl organized a 500-person march. She wanted to put a flag at a police station. Police ordered her to stop and when she didn’t they shot her in the chest.

Some protesters went underground. They created their own governments and distributed informational pamphlets. They also created secret radio stations to spread their message. Congress Radio broadcast stories of underground activity. It directed Indian people in their struggle against the British. After three months on air the police cut off transmission.

By March 1943 the protests had died down. The ‘Quit India’ campaign wasn’t successful in ending British rule in India. However, it did increase opposition to the British rule in India. It also showed the British that they could not rule India without a fight. The British would eventually have to withdraw from India and give it independence.

Gandhi was released from prison in May 1944 because he was ill. Many of his followers and other leaders remained in jail. India became independent in 1947.