

## Gandhi vs Tagore

### Why in news?

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore shared an enduring friendship that lasted from 1914-15 till Tagore's demise in 1941.

### What are the outcomes of the historic meeting between Tagore and Gandhi?

- **Historic meeting-** Gandhi and Tagore met on March 6, 1915, at Santiniketan in West Bengal, the meeting was facilitated by C F Andrews, a British social reformer and a common friend.

*Rabindranath Tagore founded Santiniketan in 1901, aiming to unite humanity beyond religious and cultural divides.*

- **Gandhi's influence-** Gandhi's stay at Santiniketan left a lasting impact on Tagore's school.
- **Gandhi Punyaha Din-** Santiniketan observes 'Gandhi Punyaha Din' annually on March 10 to honor their meeting.
- **Teachings of Self-reliance-** The celebration includes a day off for the school's staff, while students and teachers perform the chores, reflecting Gandhi's principles of self-reliance.
- **Cultural impact-** Their interactions at Santiniketan symbolize the confluence of ideas that shaped India's cultural and political landscape.

*Tagore referred to Gandhi as "Mahatma" (Great Soul) as early as 1915. Gandhi, meanwhile, readily adopted Tagore as "Gurudev" (Teacher)*

### How Gandhi and Tagore shared principles that underscored their dedication to the betterment of society and the empowerment of individuals?

| Key aspects                  | Mahatma Gandhi  | Rabindranath Tagore  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Commitment to service</b> | Gandhi's life epitomized dedicated service, and he advocated for decisions and policies ("Talisman") guided by their impact on the poorest and weakest individuals. | Tagore, though primarily recognized as a creative artist, engaged in service, particularly in the rural areas of Bengal, where he aimed to make villages self-reliant through cooperation rather than self-interest. |

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| <b>Vision of swaraj</b> | Gandhi emphasised on abhaya (fearlessness) where individuals should have the strength to fearlessly conduct their own daily lives.   | Tagore believed in atmasakthi (soul force), he stressed that true freedom is social freedom, the freedom to do good.   |
| <b>Ahimsa</b>           | Gandhi adopted Eklo Cholo re by Tagore as his life's motto, demonstrating his commitment to non-violence (ahimsa) and fearlessness (abhaya), even when it meant standing alone against popular movements or political decisions. | Tagore withdrew from the Swadeshi movement due to its deviation from his ideals and composed the song "Ekla cholo re," emphasizing the importance of walking alone when necessary. |
| <b>Harmony</b>          | Both Tagore and Gandhi's idea of India was inclusive, assimilative and free from religious and religious hatred. They were deeply anguished by sectarian violence and sought harmony in society.                                 |  |

### How Gandhi and Tagore differed in their views?

| Key aspects                              | Mahatma Gandhi  | Rabindranath Tagore   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Symbol of chakra (Spinning wheel)</b> | Gandhi defended chakra as a symbol of dignity of labour and self-reliance.  | Tagore criticized the charkha as an overwhelming symbol that overshadowed other efforts to attain swaraj (self-rule)  |
| <b>Bihar earthquake, 1934</b>            | Gandhi interpreted the earthquake as a divine punishment for the sins committed against Harijans (lower castes), urging people to repent and purify themselves.               | He disagreed with Gandhi's interpretation, argued against associating ethical principles with cosmic phenomena and criticized the acceptance of such views by a large section of society. |
| <b>Publication of contrasting views</b>  | Gandhi, in his defense, published a piece titled 'Superstition vs. Faith' in Harijan, reaffirming his belief in the connection between natural disasters and moral behaviour. | Tagore drafted a statement challenging Gandhi's interpretation of the earthquake, expressing his surprise and disagreement with the idea of divine punishment.                            |
| <b>Moral and ethical principles</b>      | Gandhi's adherence to certain beliefs, even in the face of criticism, demonstrated his unwavering commitment to his principles.   | Tagore's dissent showcased his intellectual independence and willingness to challenge prevailing notions, even those held by his friend Gandhi.   |

- Gandhi and Tagore shared a deep friendship and engaged in *meaningful discourse*, their relationship was characterized by significant philosophical differences.
- Despite their friendship, they did not hesitate to challenge each other's viewpoints, emphasizing the importance of *critical thinking* and *scientific reasoning* in understanding complex phenomena.
- Their ability to engage in respectful debate while maintaining their individual perspectives underscores the richness of their *intellectual exchange* and the complexity of their relationship.

## References

1. [Indian Express- Friendship between Gandhi and Tagore](#)
2. [Peepul Tree- Gandhi and Tagore the great debate](#)

