



Story of Usha Mehta and Congress Radio

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Why in News?

The recent release of a film depicting the life of freedom fighter **Usha Mehta** resurfaces the importance of her historical contribution and sacrifice during the [Quit India Movement](#).

What was the Role of Usha Mehta in Quit India Movement (QIM)?

- **About QIM:**
 - Commencing on **8th August 1942**, marked by Mahatma Gandhi's iconic speech with **slogan Do or Die**. The QIM symbolises **mass civil disobedience, nationwide protests, and the establishment of parallel governance structures**.
 - British authorities responded with mass arrests, **detaining prominent leaders** including Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel, thereby drastically reducing the movement's intensity.
- **About Usha Mehta:**
 - Usha Mehta, then a **22-year-old law student**, was galvanised by Gandhi's ideology, prompting her to forsake her studies and actively participate in the movement.
 - **Recognising the efficacy of propagating information**, Mehta conceived the notion of **Congress Radio as a secretive means of communication**.
- **Establishment of Congress Radio:**
 - Facing the **challenges of funding and technical expertise**, Mehta, alongside **associates such as Nariman Printer**, endeavoured to establish Congress Radio.
 - Despite regulatory restrictions imposed by British authorities, the Printer's adeptness facilitated the **creation of a functional transmitter**, enabling **Congress Radio's inaugural broadcast on 3rd September 1942**.
- **Catalysing Independence Through Broadcasts:**
 - **Congress Radio swiftly emerged as a preeminent source of news** for Indians, circumventing colonial censorship and disseminating crucial information regarding the movement's progress.
 - **Beyond news broadcasting, the station aired political speeches and ideological messages**, strengthening the people's dedication to gaining independence.
- **Legal Consequences and Mehta's Legacy:**
 - The secretive operations of Congress Radio ultimately **attracted the attention of British authorities, leading to the arrest and subsequent trial of Mehta and her associates**.
 - Mehta, revered as "**Radio-ben**" for her pioneering efforts, **continued to follow Gandhian principles post-independence**, garnering national recognition, including the [Padma Vibhushan](#) in 1998.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi



“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

Brief Description

Birth: 2nd October 1869, Porbandar (Gujarat).

2nd October is observed as **International Day of Non-Violence**.

Profile: Lawyer, Politician, Social activist, Writer and led Nationalist Movement.

Father of the Nation (first called by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose).

Ideology: Believed in the ideas of non-violence, Truth, Honesty, Care for Mother Nature, Compassion, Welfare of Downtrodden etc.

Political Mentor: Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Death: Shot dead by Nathuram Godse (30th January, 1948).

30th January is observed as **Martyrs' Day**

Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times.



Gandhi in South Africa (1893-1915)

Used satyagraha against racist regime (Native Africans and Indians were discriminated).

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated every year on 9th January, to commemorate his return from South Africa.

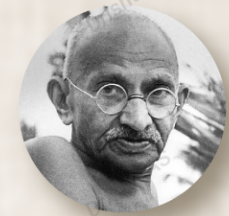
Contribution in India's Freedom Struggle

Small-scale movements like Champaran Satyagraha (1917)—First Civil Disobedience, Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)—First Hunger Strike, and Kheda Satyagraha (1918)—First Non-Cooperation.

Nationwide Mass Movements: Against Rowlatt Act (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), Quit India Movement (1942).

Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931): Between Gandhi and Lord Irwin that marked the end of a period of civil disobedience.

Poona Pact (1932): Between Gandhi and **B.R. Ambedkar**; this abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes (Communal Award).



Books Written

Hind Swaraj, My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)

Weeklies

Harijan, Navjivan, Young India, Indian Opinion.

Gandhi Peace Prize

is given by India for social, economic, and political transformation through Gandhian methods.

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

“You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.”

Read More: [Quit India Movement](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to 8th August, 1942 in Indian history, which one of the following statements is correct?

- (a) The Quit India Resolution was adopted by the AICC.
- (b) The Viceroy's Executive Council was expanded to include more Indians.
- (c) The Congress ministries resigned in seven provinces.
- (d) Cripps proposed an Indian Union with full Dominion Status once the Second World War was over.

Ans: (a)

Q. With reference to the Indian freedom struggle, consider the following events: (2017)

1. Mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy
2. Quit India Movement launched
3. Second Round Table Conference

What is the correct chronological sequence of the above events?

- (a) 1 - 2 - 3
- (b) 2 - 1 - 3
- (c) 3 - 2 - 1
- (d) 3 - 1 - 2

Ans: (c)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/story-of-usha-mehta-and-congress-radio>

