



Congressional Gold Medal

Why in News

Recently, a resolution has been reintroduced in the US House of Representatives to posthumously award the Congressional Gold Medal to [Mahatma Gandhi](#) for his contributions made through his methods of non-violence.

- If given the award, Mahatma Gandhi **would become the first Indian to receive the Congressional Gold Medal**, which is the **highest civilian award in the US**.

Key Points

▪ About the Award:

- The **US Congress (legislature) has commissioned gold medals as its highest expression of national appreciation** for distinguished achievements and contributions.
- The **first recipients** of the medal were **participants of the American Revolution (1775-83), the War of 1812 and the Mexican War (1846-48)**.
- The scope was broadened to **include actors, authors, entertainers, musicians, explorers, athletes, humanitarians and foreign recipients** among pioneers in some other fields.
- It has been awarded to the 1980 US summer Olympics team, Robert F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela and George Washington among many others.
- Most recently, the medal was **awarded to the US Capitol Police** and those who protected the US Capitol on 6th January 2021, the day of the siege.

▪ Non-Violence:

- The principle of non-violence — also known as **non-violent resistance** — **rejects the use of physical violence in order to achieve social or political change**.
 - **From Mahatma Gandhi:** The essence of non-violent technique is that it seeks to **liquidate antagonisms but not the antagonists**.
- Nonviolent action is a technique by which people who reject passivity and submission, and who see struggle as essential, can wage their conflict without violence.

- There are **three main categories of non-violence action:**

- Protest and persuasion, including marches and vigils,
- Non-cooperation,
- Non-violent intervention, such as blockades and occupation.

- **2nd October is the International Day of Non-Violence**, which is observed on the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

▪ Gandhian Strategy of Non-Violence:

- Gandhi **took the religious principle of ahimsa (doing no harm)** common to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism and turned it into a non-violent tool for mass action.
- Gandhi called it **"satyagraha"** which means **'truth force.'**

- In this doctrine, the aim of any non-violent conflict was to convert the opponent; to win over his mind and his heart and persuade him.
- He used it to **fight not only colonial rule but social evils** such as racial discrimination and untouchability as well.
- In **South Africa (1893-1915), he had successfully fought the racist regime** with a novel method of mass agitation, which he called satyagraha.
- Mahatma Gandhi's **first civil disobedience movement in India** was in support of the indigo cultivators **in Champaran, Bihar in 1917.**
- **In 1919**, he decided to launch a **nationwide satyagraha** against the proposed **Rowlatt Act (1919).**
- During the **Non-cooperation movement (1920-22)**, there was a massive upsurge of enthusiasm for Gandhi and his methods, with Indians from all political spectrum and religions joining the movement.
- Other examples include **Salt Satyagraha** (1930) and **Quit India movement (1942).**
- Many **people such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandella, Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, etc. have followed the path** shown by Bapu and have brought prosperity to themselves and their societies.

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