

The Making of the National Movement 1870s-1947

Q1. What was the Rowlatt act? Give an account of the Rowlatt Satyagraha?

Ans. The Rowlatt Satyagraha

- i. In 1919 Gandhiji gave a call for a satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act that the British had just passed.
- ii. The Act curbed fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression and strengthened police powers.
- iii. Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and others felt that the government had no right to restrict people's basic freedoms. They criticised the Act as "devilish" and tyrannical.
- iv. Gandhiji asked the Indian people to observe 6 April 1919 as a day of non-violent opposition to this Act, as a day of "humiliation and prayer" and hartal (strike). Satyagraha Sabhas were set up to launch the movement.
- v. The Rowlatt Satyagraha turned out to be the first all-India struggle against the British government although it was largely restricted to cities.
- vi. In April 1919 there were a number of demonstrations and hartals in the country and the government used brutal measures to suppress them.
- vii. The Jallianwala Bagh atrocities, inflicted by General Dyer in Amritsar on Baisakhi day (13 April), were a part of this repression.