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
Commitment to service	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.

Vision of swaraj	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.
Ahimsa	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.
Harmony	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
Symbol of chakra (Spinning wheel)	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)
Bihar earthquake, 1934	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.
Publication of contrasting views	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.
Moral and ethical principles	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

