

how many different struggles became one movement

The First World War and the years after it



- defence spending rose steeply, paid for by war loans, higher customs duties and a new income tax
- prices doubled between 1913 and 1918, and the burden fell hardest on the common people
- villages were made to supply soldiers, and forced recruitment caused widespread anger in the countryside
- crops failed in 1918 to 1919 and again in 1920 to 1921, and an influenza epidemic followed
- the 1921 census suggests 12 to 13 million people died of the famines and the epidemic together

Satyagraha, the idea Gandhi brought back

- Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa in January 1915
- satyagraha rests on the power of truth: a just cause needs no physical force, it can appeal to the conscience of the oppressor
- Champaran, 1916, in Bihar, against the oppressive indigo plantation system
- Kheda, 1917, in Gujarat, where peasants hit by crop failure and plague asked for relaxation in revenue collection
- Ahmedabad, 1918, a satyagraha among the cotton mill workers

The Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh

- the Rowlatt Act of 1919 was pushed through the Imperial Legislative Council despite the united opposition of its Indian members
- it allowed political prisoners to be detained without trial for two years and gave the government wide powers to crush political activity
- Gandhi called for a nationwide hartal on 6 April, and rallies, strikes and shop closures followed
- on 13 April 1919 a crowd gathered in the enclosed ground of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, many of them villagers there for the annual Baisakhi fair
- General Dyer blocked the only exit and opened fire, killing hundreds, his stated object was to produce a moral effect
- as the news spread crowds attacked government buildings, the government answered with brutal repression, and Gandhi called the movement off