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The Gandhi Peace Prize: Award, Jury, and Notable Recipients

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The Gandhi Peace Prize: Award, Jury, and Notable Recipients

Nelson Mandela won it. So did a publishing house in Gorakhpur. India's own peace prize has gone to presidents, a space agency and a printing press.

1 What the Prize Is

Why was the Gandhi Peace Prize created?

The **Government of India** started the prize in **1995**. That year marked the **125th birth anniversary** of Mahatma Gandhi. The Ministry of Culture runs it.

It is an **annual award**. Its full name is the Gandhi Peace Prize for **social, economic and political transformation through non-violence**. It honours people and groups who work for peace and ease human suffering.

What does the winner receive?

The prize carries **₹1 crore**, a citation, a plaque and a traditional handicraft or handloom item.

The first winner was **Julius Nyerere**, former President of Tanzania.

> **Quick check 1.** The Gandhi Peace Prize was started in 1995 to mark Gandhi's 125th birth anniversary. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in; culture.gov.in

2 Who Sits on the Jury

Who picks the winner?

A prize this big needs a strong panel. It mixes the government, the courts and Parliament. The jury has five members:

- The **Prime Minister** of India, who is the **Chairman**.
- The **Chief Justice of India**.
- The **Leader of the Opposition** in the Lok Sabha.
- Two **eminent persons**, who are nominated members.

The first three sit **ex-officio**. That means they sit because of the office they hold.

How long do the nominated members serve?

They serve for **three years**. One earlier pair was nominated for the term from **3 May 2017** to **2 May 2020**.

The **President of India is not a member**.

What does the jury look at?

Normally, the jury considers work done in the **ten years** before the nomination.

The award may be divided between two persons or institutions. A prize cannot go to work by a person who has died. But a **posthumous award** may be made if the death came after the proposal reached the jury.

> **Quick check 2.** The President of India sits on the jury of the Gandhi Peace Prize. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in

3 Who Has Won It

Who won in the early years?

- **1995:** Julius Nyerere, Tanzania.
- **1996:** A.T. Ariyaratne, founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka.
- **1997:** Gerhard Fischer, Germany.
- **1998:** Ramakrishna Mission, India.
- **1999:** Baba Amte, India.
- **2000: Nelson Mandela** and the **Grameen Bank** of Bangladesh, jointly.
- **2001:** John Hume, Ireland.
- **2002:** Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan.
- **2003:** Václav Havel, former President of Czechoslovakia.
- **2005:** Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa.

Why is there a gap?

The prize was **not awarded** in **2004** and from **2006 to 2012**. The jury is free to hold it back when no case stands out.

Who won after the gap?

- **2013:** Chandi Prasad Bhatt.
- **2014: ISRO**, the Indian Space Research Organisation.
- **2015:** Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari.
- **2016:** Akshaya Patra Foundation and Sulabh International, jointly.

- **2017:** Ekal Abhiyan Trust.
- **2018:** Yohei Sasakawa, Japan.
- **2019:** Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said of Oman.
- **2020: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**, Bangladesh.
- **2021: Gita Press, Gorakhpur**.

The jury chose Gita Press on **18 June 2023**. PIB credited its work in spreading Gandhian ideals of peace and social harmony. Gita Press was set up in **1923**.

> **Quick check 3.** The 2000 Gandhi Peace Prize was shared by Nelson Mandela and the Grameen Bank. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: culture.gov.in; pib.gov.in

Sources: pib.gov.in

4 Who Can Win It

Can institutions and foreigners win?

Yes to both. The prize is open to all persons, **regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or gender**. It also goes to organisations.

That is why the **Grameen Bank**, **ISRO**, **Sulabh International** and **Gita Press** could win it.

What pattern do the winners show?

Leaders, charities, companies and agencies have all been honoured. Foreign winners include Nyerere, Mandela, Havel, Tutu, Hume, Sasakawa, Qaboos and Mujibur Rahman.

Quick check 4. Only Indian citizens and Indian institutions can win the Gandhi Peace Prize. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in

5 Other Awards Compared

Is it the same as the Indira Gandhi Prize?

No. The **Indira Gandhi Prize** is a separate award. A 2012 PIB release called it a tribute to Indira Gandhi as a crusader for global peace, universal disarmament and a new international economic order.

What is the key difference?

- The **Gandhi Peace Prize** honours **non-violence** and service to humanity. It carries Mahatma Gandhi's name.
- The **Indira Gandhi Prize** is for **peace, disarmament and development**. It carries Indira Gandhi's name.

Do not mix the two when a question lists both names. Read the full title of each award in the options.

Quick check 5. The Gandhi Peace Prize was given every year without a break after 1995. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in; culture.gov.in

6 Exam Recall

What should you remember?

- **Start: 1995**, the **125th** birth anniversary.
- **Prize: ₹1 crore** and a citation.
- **Jury:** PM (Chairman), CJI, Leader of the Opposition, two eminent persons.
- **Not on the jury:** the President.
- **Gap: 2004** and **2006 to 2012**.
- **Joint winners:** Mandela and Grameen Bank (**2000**).
- **Latest found:** Gita Press (**2021**).

Which traps come up?

- The President is on the jury. The President is not.
- The prize is only for individuals. Institutions can win too.
- Only Indians are eligible. It is open to all nationalities.
- It is given every year. It was withheld in 2004 and 2006 to 2012.

> **Quick check 6.** Gita Press, Gorakhpur won the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2021. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Practice MCQs

1. Who amongst the following are members of the Jury to select the recipient of the 'Gandhi Peace Prize'?
1. The President of India
2. The Prime Minister of India
3. The Chief Justice of India
4. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Select the correct answer using the code given below. [UPSC CSP 2025]

A. II and IV only

B. I, II and III

C. II, III and IV

D. I and III only

See answer ↓

2. The Gandhi Peace Prize was instituted in 1995 to mark which milestone?

A. The centenary of the Champaran Satyagraha

B. Gandhi's 100th death anniversary

C. 50 years of Indian independence

D. Gandhi's 125th birth anniversary

See answer ↓

3. Which two recipients jointly won the Gandhi Peace Prize in 2000?

A. The Dalai Lama and Kofi Annan

B. Desmond Tutu and Vaclav Havel

C. Nelson Mandela and the Grameen Bank

D. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Gita Press

See answer ↓

4. The Gandhi Peace Prize was withheld for several consecutive years due to a lack of a suitable candidate.

Which period was this?

A. 2013-2019

B. 2001-2005

C. 2006-2012

D. 1995-2000

See answer ↓

5. Gita Press, founded in 1923 and known for publishing religious texts, won the Gandhi Peace Prize in which year?

A. 2019

B. 2021

C. 2018

D. 2020

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** The Gandhi Peace Prize jury has five members: the Prime Minister (chair), the Chief Justice of India, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and two eminent persons. In the 2021 jury, the Speaker, Om Birla, sat as one of those two; he is not an extra ex-officio member. The President is not a member. So II, III and IV are correct. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** The Government of India instituted the Gandhi Peace Prize in 1995, on Gandhi's 125th birth anniversary. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Bangladesh's Grameen Bank jointly won the 2000 Gandhi Peace Prize. ↑ Q3
4. **C.** The prize was withheld between 2006 and 2012, since the jury did not find a suitable candidate in those years. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** Gita Press won the Gandhi Peace Prize in 2021, recognised for its contribution through Gandhian methods. ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** The Government of India started it in 1995 on that anniversary. ↑ 1
2. **False.** The President is not a member of the jury. ↑ 2
3. **True.** They won it jointly in 2000. ↑ 3
4. **False.** The prize is open to all persons regardless of nationality. ↑ 4
5. **False.** It was not awarded in 2004 and from 2006 to 2012. ↑ 5
6. **True.** The jury chose Gita Press on 18 June 2023. ↑ 6

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