

**THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND GANDHI -  
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF HIS POLITICAL STRATEGY**

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## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the present work on “The Indian National Movement and Gandhi – An Analytical Study of His Political Strategy” is a bonafide research work carried out by me under the guidance of **Dr. K. Gopalankutty**, Reader in History, Department of History, University of Calicut. It has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.



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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the present work entitled "The Indian National Movement and Gandhi – An Analytical Study of His Political Strategy" is a bonafide research work carried out by **Ms. P. Laina** under my supervision and that it has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma earlier.



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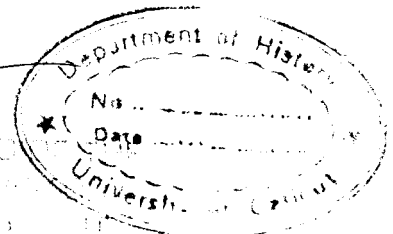
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## INDRODUCTORY

Indian National Movement was the struggle between colonialism and anti-imperialistic forces that developed in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These forces were developed by the untiring activities of Nationalists. It remained as a forum of debate and rather than an instrument of action. Some remarkable changes occurred with the entry of Gandhi. He entered the Indian political scene in 1917 by organizing some local movements. It was with the Rowlatt Satyagraha and Non-cooperation movement that he emerged as a national leader and also started associating with the Congress. From then onwards Gandhi became one of the most significant leaders of the National Movement and National Congress as well. Gandhi led the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-21, Civil disobedience movement of 1930, Quit India movement of 1942 against the colonial authority. These were the periods when Gandhi acted as the ultimate authority of the Congress. The period in between were the periods of political oblivion in which Gandhi confined himself to Constructive Programme and social reform activities. Indian National Movement entered its important phase during the Gandhian period.

A basic aspect of the dynamics of the national movement was the strategy it adopted in its struggle against colonial rule. This study attempts

to highlight Gandhian political strategy in the context of the National Movement. We believe that mass mobilization an important aspect of his strategy. Here we propose to take up a detailed study of the mobilization of the various sections of the society undertook by Gandhi in order to organize a mass movement against an Imperialist Government. What is intended is not an evaluation of the specific programmes of Congress or an episodic narrative of the National Movement. The objective is to evaluate the political strategy adopted and applied by Gandhi in the National Movement.

A focus on the overall strategy of the Indian National Movement has been lacking in almost all the existing studies of the movement and it might thus appear that the Indian National Movement had no clear-cut strategy. But in our study we are trying to establish that the whole movement was based on a specific strategy. Though large elements of this strategy of struggle evolved during the Moderate and Extremist phases of the movement, it was structured and completed during the Gandhian phase of the movement and in Gandhi's political practice. So this study focuses on the period, 1917-1947. Gandhi's contribution to Indian – and perhaps world history – is as a political leader whose political strategy and tactics and techniques of struggle moved millions into political action. It

is this aspect which has to be evaluated in detail. An effective critique of Gandhian leadership and its tactics at any specific period of time or its stand on political issue could be made only if the critique extended to and was based on an understanding of the Gandhian strategy.

The study is both interpretative and analytical. Since in this study the primary importance is given to the critical examination of Gandhian Strategy, secondary works are also of great importance. For the present work the sources which we consulted are: the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, the Private Papers that are available in National Archives and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Home political files (NAI), AICC files (NMML) and also published works and a wide range of journals.

The present work is divided in to five chapters. The first chapter is a historiographical critique of some of the major works written about Gandhi and the Indian National Movement. The chapter is divided in to four sections (a) Nationalist (b) Marxist (c) Subalternist and (d) Other Works.

The second chapter is divided into two parts. The first section deals with the nature of the Colonial state. India being a colony of Great Britain at that time it requires a detailed analysis of the nature and policies of the

British Indian Government and how it affected the Indian people and its influence on the making of the political strategy of the Indian National Congress. In it we have tried to analyze whether the colonial state is a hegemonic, semi-hegemonic or an autocratic state. The Gramscian concept of hegemony is useful for an understanding of the problem. We also analyze how power was conceived in evolving a political strategy which was based on non violence. Gandhi's whole movement was based on the assumption that no ruler can rule without 'the consent' of the ruled.

Gandhi's entry into the Indian political scene and his early struggles forms the second section of the second chapter. Gandhi was an 'outsider' till 1915 in the Indian political scene. He at first participated in some of the local disputes and experimented his Satyagraha in the Indian context. Through these local movements he established contact with the Indian masses. But it was by organizing Rowlatt Satyagraha he emerged as a leader of an all India stature. It was during the non cooperation movement of 1920 that he became successful in organizing a mass movement which was completely based on his idea of Satyagraha.

Gandhi mobilized hitherto immobilized social classes such as peasantry and Labourers. The Leftists also had their own programmes to organize the peasantry and labourers. Gandhi was successful in getting the

support of the peasants and labourers for his movement. He was also successful in containing the activities of Left. Even though the Leftists tried to mobilize the masses they failed in getting a mass following at the all India level. Our third chapter discusses in detail Gandhi's programmes to organize the peasantry and labourers and his view on class conflict and his trusteeship formula. The chapter also deals with Gandhi's interaction with the Leftists on various programmes.

Gandhi politically mobilized the social groups like Muslims, Harijans and Women. Our fourth chapter discusses Gandhi's programmes to organize and mobilize these social groups. He was the first national leader to develop a political programme to mobilize these groups irrespective of the class divisions that existed within these groups. He became successful in getting the support of the Muslims in 1920 by incorporating the Khilafat issue in the Non cooperation movement. But once he had withdrawn the movement he steadily lost the Muslim support.

Gandhi was successful in organizing the Harijans and the women. For organizing them he depended on the Jain / Hindu tradition but at the same time he re-interpreted it. His untouchability programme helped in getting the support of the Harijans, who formed the bulk of agricultural labourers. He succeeded in making the women participate in the political

movements Women found no difficulty in participating in the non violent movements organized by Gandhi.

In conclusion we discuss the change that he had brought about in the Indian politics and his success in mobilizing the various sections of the Indian population. We also analyzed the applicability of Gandhian techniques in a liberal democratic state.

### **Acknowledgements:**

For the present work I have consulted sources available in various libraries. I owe thanks to all those librarians for permitting me to consult the sources referred to in the bibliography: the National Archives of India, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, the Gandhi Memorial Museum and Library and Sapru House Library in New Delhi; Kerala University Library, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Library, Kerala Legislative Assembly Library, A.K.G. Centre Library, Centre for Developmental Studies Library in Thiruvananthapuram; Central Library and History Department Library of Calicut University, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Library in Calicut; the Punjabi University Library, Patiala, and Panjab University (Chandigarh) Regional Centre Library, Mukatsar, in Punjab. My thanks

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P. Laina

**ABBREVIATIONS**

AICC	–	All India Congress Committee
AITUC	–	All India Trade Union Congress
CP	–	Central Provinces
CPI	–	Communist Party of India
CSP	–	Congress Socialist Party
CWMG	–	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
EPW	–	Economic and Political Weekly
HSRA	–	Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army)
INA	–	Indian National Army
KW	–	Keep-With (papers to be kept with a government file)
NAI	–	National Archives of India
NMML	–	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
PCC	–	Provincial Congress Committee
UP	–	United Province

## Chapter-I

# INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND GANDHISM - A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CRITIQUE

There are a lot of works on Gandhi. As it is not possible to review all of them, we try to critically examine only some. According to the nature of the works we have divided them into four separate sections: Nationalist, Marxist, Subaltern and Other works, i. e. which do not come under these categories. The division is made on the basis of the broad framework within which these works were written. The works of the admirers are not dealt with as we feel that it is not of much use for the present work.

### SECTION-A: NATIONALIST PERSPECTIVES

Nationalist history of India was started as a reaction against the imperialist historiography. Till 1947 the nationalist school contributed very little to the study of the national movement because the colonial authorities never allowed them to express their anti- colonial feeling. So they had to confine themselves to the glorification of the Indian past. Even after 1947, however, the nationalist school has failed to make a major contribution at the analytical or historiographic level.

R.C. Majumdar finds it difficult to draw a line between nationalist and other national historians. Therefore, he considers it is better to restrict the use of the term to those Indians who are not purely or merely actuated by a scientific spirit to make a critical study of an historical problem concerning India, like any other country, but whose primary or even secondary objects include an examination or re-examination of some points of national interest or importance, particularly those on which full or accurate information is not available or which have been misunderstood, misconceived or wrongly represented. Such an object is not necessarily in conflict with a scientific and critical study, and a nationalist historian is not, therefore, necessarily a propagandist or a charlatan.”<sup>1</sup> According to I.D. Gaur “....those who glorify India’s past and eulogize the role of Indian National congress as the sole representatives of India’s struggle for freedom are the nationalist historians.”<sup>2</sup>

For our convenience we try to analyze the works of those Indian historians who in their attempt to write the history of the freedom movement, do not follow any rigorous ideology like the Marxists and those who write the Indian National Movement as a struggle between

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<sup>1</sup> R.C.Majumdar, ‘Nationalist Historians’, in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, Oxford University Press London, 1967, p. 417

<sup>2</sup> I.D. Gaur, *Essays in History and Historiography*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p. 66

British imperialism on the one hand and the Indian people on the other. All those historians, who have elaborated the role of the elitist group and who never gave any importance to the role of the masses also belong to this group.

The works of R.C. Majumdar, B.R. Nanda and Tara Chand can be taken up for analysis.

The third volume of R.C. Majumdar's *History of the Freedom Movement in India* begins with the history of the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as the leader of the movement in 1919. He says that Gandhi combined in himself the dual role of a saint and an active politician and according to him it poses a serious problem to the historian.<sup>3</sup> He criticizes the followers of Gandhi for giving too much importance to the saintly character of Gandhi. In his work he is attempting to make a distinction between the political and saintly aspect of the Gandhian leadership – “I have necessarily to view his life and activities, thoughts, and feelings primarily from a narrow angle, namely as a politician and statesman leading a great political organization which was not intended to be a humanitarian association or World Peace Society, but had been formed

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<sup>3</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1963, p. xv

for a definite political object, namely to achieve India's freedom from political bondage."<sup>4</sup> Majumdar splits Gandhian personality into two: Gandhi as a saint and Gandhi as an active politician. He says that a historian has nothing to do with the first and so is concerned only with the second aspect. From his arguments itself, it proves that his work forms only a partial aspect of the movement because it is impossible to judge Gandhi without considering the saintly qualities of Gandhi. And it also becomes clear from his own arguments that "...Gandhi's magic personality and saintly character which has always a great appeal to Indian masses, transformed the latent energy of the people into strenuous political activity in an astonishingly short period of time."<sup>5</sup> From his arguments itself it becomes clear that it was such a personality of Gandhi played a dominant role in his political movements. How far it is possible to analyze only the political aspect without considering the saintly aspect?

Majumdar very sharply criticized Gandhi for making Khilafat question a chief problem for organizing a movement against British. "As regard the Khilafat question, it was the height of political unwisdom to make it a chief plank or problem in the struggle for freedom waged by

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xx.

India against the British.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover he accuses Gandhi for having played a dual role – a non-cooperator as a Khilafatist, and a co-operator as a Congressman. According to him Gandhi while giving importance to Hindu-Muslim unity completely ignored ‘the fundamental differences’ between them, which was a deep-rooted one.<sup>7</sup> Here Majumdar failed to perceive that a large-scale unity of Hindus and Muslims was required for organizing a movement. Moreover Gandhi based his entire policy upon Hindu-Muslim unity. Majumdar like the communalists considers Hindus and Muslims as two different nationalities. It is all because of his wrong perception of communal question.

But in his opinion no one could deny the two great results of Non-Cooperation movement that (1) the “Congress movement had become a really mass movement” and (2) “ the Indian National Congress was, almost overnight, turned into a genuine revolutionary organization.”<sup>8</sup>

Majumdar considers Gandhi as a dictator who could not tolerate opposition.<sup>9</sup> He says that the activities of Gandhi very well prove it. Gandhi never wanted to include any one, who was against his policies, in

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxiv

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

the Congress working committee. He weakened the leftists by winning over Jawaharlal Nehru. And he made the All-India Congress Committee accept his demands.<sup>10</sup> It is correct that from 1919 onwards Gandhi designed the policies of the Congress. And a majority of Congressmen obeyed him without questioning his authority. Even at times when some of the members found it difficult to agree with Gandhi's views and policy, they obeyed him because there was not a single leader who could lead the organization as efficiently as Gandhi did. Gandhi's presence in the Indian National Congress was domineering. But one has to analyze in detail what made Gandhi the sole leader of Indian National Congress. Then only one could form an idea of the nature of leadership provided by Gandhi.

Majumdar adopted a communal approach to the problem especially while dealing with Non-Cooperation Movement and communal questions. According to Bipan Chandra it is better to call him a communal historian than a nationalist historian.<sup>11</sup> Majumdar in his entire work tried to find out only the negative side of the movement.

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<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.529-530 and p.379.

<sup>11</sup> Bipan Chandra, 'Nationalist Historians' Interpretations of the Indian National Movement', in Sabyasachi Battacharya and Romila Thapar, (ed.), *Situating Indian History*, Oxford University Press, 1986, p.217.

Another historian who belongs to this category is B.R. Nanda. Nanda tried to find out the positive side of the movement. He says that in both the Champaran Satyagraha and Ahmedabad Mill Strike, even though Gandhi had to make compromise with the planters and mill owners the ultimate victory was of the peasants and the employees. Nanda says that in both these movements the tactical surrender on the part of Gandhi proved to be a strategical triumph.<sup>12</sup>

Nanda tries to find out the positive side of the Kheda Satyagraha. Even though one feels that the calling-off of the no-tax campaign “as a face-saving device and a tame end to a campaign begun with high hopes” it had some good results – “it awakened the peasantry of Gujarat, Gandhi’s province of birth, to a consciousness of its strength and gave it a great leader in Vallabhai Patel”.<sup>13</sup> Nanda says that Gandhi localized these conflicts so as not to embarrass the Government while the World War I was going on. According to him for a proper perspective of these early movements one has to remember this.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> B.R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi – A Biography*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982, pp.161-165

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.167

In Nanda's opinion 'Non-Cooperation' was an incomplete and in certain ways a misleading description of a movement which was intended not only to dismantle some institutions but also to replace them with others.<sup>15</sup> He criticized those who were against the stoppage of the Non-cooperation movement. According to him "Few of the critics could see that Chauri Chaura was not the cause, but only the occasion for the reverse gear which he had applied."<sup>16</sup> Non-Violence was so dear to Gandhi. Before launching the movement he gave much importance to non-violence in his whole speeches and articles.

Nanda also, like Tara Chand, praises the Salt Satyagraha organized by Gandhi. "Those who had scoffed at Salt Satyagraha and failed to see any connection between Salt and Swaraj had underrated Gandhi's knack for organizing the Indian masses for corporate action."<sup>17</sup>

He justifies Gandhi for signing the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He says that in Satyagraha movements a compromise with the opponent is neither heresy nor treason, but a natural and necessary step the object of satyagraha was, however, not to achieve the physical elimination or moral breakdown of an adversary but, through suffering at his hands, to initiate

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

those psychological processes which could make it possible for minds and hearts to meet.<sup>18</sup> Another point where he justifies or agrees with Gandhi was the theory of trusteeship. He considers it a “radical theory which called for voluntary sacrifices from the ‘haves’ in the interest of ‘have-nots’.”<sup>19</sup> In his analyses he didn’t try to consider the practicability of such a theory.

But he questions the feasibility of applying the non-violent technique to foreign aggression. Gandhi sticks to his non-violent technique even during the Second World War. But later Gandhi agreed to station the ‘Allied troops’ on Indian soil.<sup>20</sup>

According to Nanda Gandhi followed non-violent method ‘not only because an unarmed people had little chance of success in an armed rebellion, but because he considered violence a clumsy weapon which created more problems than it solved, and left a trail of hatred and bitterness in which genuine reconciliation was almost impossible.’<sup>21</sup>

Nanda’s work is a biographical one. In his work he always looked at the positive side of the movement. From his work it seems Gandhian

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 433, 461

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 515

leadership didn't have any drawbacks. It forms only a narration of the life and his political activities. As an uncritical work it gives only a partial view. He didn't try to analyze the whole thing in an objective manner. He tried to vindicate each and every action of Gandhi. In this manner it stands just opposite to the views of Majumdar.

Tara Chand's perception of Gandhism is a more objective analysis when compared to the ones already discussed.

In order to understand the course and character of the extraordinary movement launched, directed and sustained by Gandhi, Tara Chand says, "It is necessary to analyze the nature and courses of the amazing influence which he exercised over the minds of the Indian people as well as his numerous admirers abroad."<sup>22</sup> And it is this influence which helped him to rouse the million to offer supreme sacrifice and to call a halt when he found that they were exceeding the limits.

For Gandhi religion meant everything. According to Tara Chand, Gandhi's politics become an enigma if considered apart from his religious

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<sup>22</sup> Tara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1972, p. 191

background.”<sup>23</sup> He says that Gandhiji’s views on religion are utmost importance as they governed all his political activity.<sup>24</sup> He tries to find out the limitation of this religious base and considers this as a threat to secularism. According to him “...to cover politics with the atmosphere of a particular religion is to create psychological obstacles in the evolution of secularism and thereby to strengthen the forces of communalism.”<sup>25</sup> He considers this as a serious limitation of his political ideas.

Gandhi believed in absolute truth and Non-violence and he was very particular in keeping absolute truth and non-violence in his movements. Tarachand considers Gandhi’s belief in absolute truth and non-violence as a crucial limitation. For ordinary people it is impossible to function on this plain. So leaders must make compromise with the principles and adjust their actions to the capacity and character of ordinary man. But Gandhi failed in understanding the attitude of the common people “...Gandhiji always chose absolutely true ends and non-violent means. He disregarded human weaknesses. He did not realize that only rare individuals can remain dedicated throughout life to high ideals, and although the multitude may be momentarily impelled into a mood of

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207

exaltation, it cannot maintain it for a long time. His neglect of realities was responsible for his frustrations.”<sup>26</sup>

Tara Chand says that in every movement organized by Gandhi, he failed in getting the desired results. According to him “the satyagraha of 1919 for the repeal of the Rowlatt Act was pronounced ‘a Himalayan miscalculation.’ That of 1920 ended in the tragedy of Chauri Chaura and failed to rectify the Punjab wrong or to satisfy the Khatlafatists’ demands. The Salt *Satyagraha* which was undertaken to establish *Poorna Swaraj* (complete independence) led instead to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which lured Gandhi to futile cooperation with an impossible Round Table conference.

The Civil Disobedience movement which lasted from 1930 to 1934 with a short break in 1931, the Satyagraha offered by individualism 1940-41 and the Quit India resolution of 1942 which did not ensure in a campaign, had little impact.”<sup>27</sup>

From his works it seems that Gandhi failed in organizing a movement successfully. Even though he criticized the futility of Gandhi’s movements he did not want to conclude “the *Satyagrahas* were sterile efforts.” He argues that “India’s fight had a two-fold aspect. From the

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220

external point of view it was a struggle to end the domination and rule of a foreign power. But essentially it was a moral struggle.”<sup>28</sup>

He criticizes Gandhi for inaugurating Non-cooperation campaign in support of the Khilafat movement. According to him “unfortunately neither Gandhiji nor the Indian Khilafatist realized that their objective was neither politically practicable nor wholly justified.”<sup>29</sup> Gandhi’s desire to secure permanent unity by cooperating with the Muslims in the Khilafat agitation had little chance of fulfillment. The causes of the communal antagonism were deep.<sup>30</sup> Gandhiji tried to secure Hindu-Muslim unity without understanding the deep rooted communal antagonism of these two religions.

He justifies the stoppage of Non-cooperation because of its practical aspect. He says that “Apparently the Congress organization was losing control and the masses were moving towards anarchy and chaos. It was necessary to assert the leadership of the Congress so that it might be possible to revive the movement in future. Mass violence could only bring

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428

about bloodshed on a large scale, and the demoralization which would follow would be worse than that after the Revolt of 1857.<sup>31</sup>

He praises Gandhi for organizing a movement like Salt Satyagraha – “No commander of military plan of operations could have done better. The salt Satyagraha had all the elements of high class strategy - surprise, universal mobilization of forces, discipline, organization, simplicity of tactics and universal availability of means and instruments of war, challenging and surrounding the forces of the enemy from all side, drama. A strange war in which the losses and casualties and suffering were all on one side.”<sup>32</sup>

Even though he says that non-violence was so dear to Gandhiji even than Swaraj<sup>33</sup> he questions the way Gandhi and his followers campaigned to start the Quit India movement. He asks “The movement was to be a struggle – a fight to finish, to end foreign domination, and all methods of mass movement from general strikes to stoppage of trains, nonpayment of revenues, tampering with the loyalty of civil service and the army were to be resorted to. How could such a movement remain non-

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 423

<sup>32</sup> Tara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. IV Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broad Casting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 124 – 125.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 423

violent? The entire phraseology used by Gandhi and his lieutenants was provocative and associated with violence. They wished to launch a violent movement of an all- India nature.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Tara Chand points out two great results that Gandhi's movements had achieved. In the first place they had removed the illusion of the British that their empire was morally justified, that its beneficence, though denied by the few, was recognized by the Indian masses, that the majority of them were loyal and desired the continuation of British. Gandhi had succeeded by his non-violent effort to convince them that they had to quit. The second result was that through non-violent and hate-free character of the struggle, it prevented the growth of war-psychosis. Instead of rousing the passion for violence these movements led to the realization of the futility of violent methods.<sup>35</sup>

Tara Chand offers a some what balanced view. He neither tries to praise Gandhi's activities nor tries to belittle his efforts. He gives narration of the whole movement without making critical study of the various aspects of the movement.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 399 – 400

The works of the nationalist historians largely remained un-critical and non-analytical. Even though they consider economic exploitation as one of the important cause for the rise of Indian nationalism they failed to give a materialistic interpretation to the whole movement. Bipan Chandra considers that one of their major failures has been their “inability to grasp the class aspects of Indian society (and the implication this had for the national movement), even while legitimately underlining the unity of all Indians in their struggle against imperialism.<sup>36</sup> According to I.D. Gaur “The nationalist historiography on Gandhi and his movement simply view Gandhi as *chrismatic*. But no where it unfolds the socio-cultural context of the *chrismatic* leadership.”<sup>37</sup>

Nationalist historians give only an uncritical or naive picture of Gandhian leadership. They never tried to point out the efforts and sacrifices made by the common people. Nationalist historiography lacks a rigorous theoretical framework. Altogether it forms only a narration of events and an uncritical depiction of the efficiency of Gandhi in leading the movement.

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<sup>36</sup> Bipan Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 235

<sup>37</sup> I.D. Gaur, *op. cit.*, p.77

## **SECTION B: MARXIST PERSPECTIVES**

Marxist historians give us an altogether different view of Gandhism and the method of struggle Gandhi adopted, his role in the politicization of Indian masses. They also consider the Indian National movement as a bourgeois led movement and Gandhi as the leader of bourgeoisie. Even though one may find it difficult to agree with some of the views of the Marxist historians, it sometimes provides a very objective analysis of certain aspects of Gandhism. They bring out the limitations of Gandhism and some of the techniques of Gandhi and also tried to analyze some of the aspects which the nationalist historians and Gandhians usually tried to exaggerate for example about the mobilization of the masses during the Gandhian phase of the Indian National movement. Some of the basic questions which the Marxist historians had undertaken in their studies were whether Gandhi's leadership limited the scope of the National Movement? Even after the active mobilization of masses why certain sections of the population remained aloof from the mainstream of Indian National Movement? What made Gandhiji to follow a policy which ultimately helped the class interests of the bourgeoisie?

Even though, S.A. Dange made a comparison of Gandhi and Lenin in 1920s itself, “M.N.Roy was the first Marxist to evaluate Gandhi’s role in Indian politics strictly from the Marxist perspective.”<sup>38</sup>

S.A. Dange in his study tries to place the role of masses in the national movement on lofty plane and also analyzed the part played by the actions of the masses in bringing forth Gandhi’s innate qualities of leadership. To quote him “Gandhi learnt from the masses and led them.”<sup>39</sup> According to him it was the actions of masses which helped in formulating the techniques that is to be adopted in the coming movements.

Dange criticizes the way Gandhi had withdrawn the Non-Cooperation movement. But once he understood the mistake he had committed and how the British took advantage of his policy of non-violence, he never repeated the similar mistake in his political career. He never made non-violence a necessary pre-condition of any of his later movements. According to Dange Gandhi made such a deviation in his methods because the masses never accepted his pre-condition of ahimsa.

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<sup>38</sup> Subrata Mukherjee, *Essays in Marxist Theory and Practice*, Sanskriti Publications, 1991, p.121

<sup>39</sup> S.A. Dange, ‘Mahatma Gandhi and History’, S.A. Dange, et. al., *The Mahatma: Marxist Evaluation*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977, p. 6

“Violence and non-violence ceased to be the decisive and determining factors in his ~~direction~~ of mass movements, after seeing the disastrous effects of his line in 1921, though he continued to preach as before.”<sup>40</sup>

Dange’s analysis was in a typical Marxist style. He does not want to consider Gandhi a sole force in making Indian National Movement a successful one. Moreover when we go through his studies, it seems that he was not giving due consideration to the effective leadership given by Gandhi in the very crucial phase of the National movement, but exaggerated the role of the masses in the National Movement.

Another Marxist historian, A.R. Desai in his analysis tried to establish that Indian Nationalism was governed by bourgeois class outlook and Gandhi’s policies and that methods always helped the bourgeois in safeguarding their class interests. From his view it seems that Gandhi formulated his policies in such a way as to serve the aims and interests of bourgeoisie – “The ideology of Gandhi, its political theory, economic doctrine, and ethical views, arose out of the historical needs of the national bourgeoisie.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>41</sup> A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1993, p. 369

In spite of pointing out the limitation of Gandhi he wanted to signify the role Gandhi played in mass mobilization – “He was the first national leader who recognized the role of the masses and mass action in the struggle for national liberation in contrast to earlier leaders...”<sup>42</sup> and making national movement a multi class movement. “He...made, for the first time, the Indian nationalist movement a multi-class and mass nationalist movement in spite of its limitations due to his ideology.”<sup>43</sup>

Even though A. R. Desai considers some of the basic elements of Gandhism as anti-progressive and against the forward march of history, he provides a somewhat balanced view about the role of Gandhi in the national movement. But he tried to give too much importance to the bourgeois character of the movement. Instead of analyzing what made Gandhi serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and the circumstances which made him to design his policies according to the interests of bourgeoisie he simply criticized Gandhi for accepting the leadership of the bourgeoisie.

Another Marxist scholar who analyzed Gandhism in a detailed manner was E.M.S. Namboodiripad. A follower of Gandhi in his early days, E. M. S. later became an ardent follower of Communism.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347

E.M.S. also, like other Marxist scholars, considered Gandhi as a representative of the bourgeoisie but at the same time he did not say that 'Gandhiji had any aim to protect the interests of bourgeoisie.'<sup>44</sup> May be, Gandhi truly believed that he was not protecting the interests of a particular class or community on the other hand he believed that he was protecting the interests of a nation as a whole. But the question is that what were the results of his practical activities?<sup>45</sup>

E. M. S. also considers mass mobilization as one thing which makes Gandhi different from other leaders. He got inspiration from the simple and sincere works of common man. Gandhi identified himself as one among the common man which enabled him to 'follow a particular political ideology which was different from that of the 'extremists' and the 'moderates'.<sup>46</sup>

Even though E. M. S. gives due importance to the part played by Gandhi in mass mobilization he argues that the political consciousness of masses was not just because of Gandhi's task but he considers it as 'a result of some events occurred in India as well as because of some

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<sup>44</sup> E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Gandhiyum Gandhisavum* (in Malayalam), Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 1994, p. 10

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52

international events'.<sup>47</sup> But he considers that Gandhi's mass mobilization was of a limited nature. Gandhi tried to confine the activities of masses. According to E. M. S. 'he was very particular about that the masses should work under the leadership of bourgeoisie'.<sup>48</sup>

E.M.S. tries to show the importance given to the interests of the bourgeoisie by Gandhi and the Congress. He says that it is very clear from the resolution in connection with the Non-cooperation movement that it was designed to be led by the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. He sees in it the basic technique of Gandhi that is making compromise with the imperialist regime. E.M.S. says 'the non-violent non-cooperation movement was envisaged as a programme to compel the authorities to make compromise with congress rather than as something which could expel imperialist regime.'<sup>49</sup> Gandhi adopted this technique of making compromise with the imperialists with the support of restricted mass struggle.

Gandhiji always worked according to the interests of the bourgeoisie.<sup>50</sup> E.M.S. considers this as a reason which made Gandhi to turn

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125

his attention from the Civil Disobedience movement to a comparatively lesser problem of the upliftment of Harijans. As against this he also argues that Gandhi adopted such a method to overcome the existing political crisis and thereby to re open a channel to make discussions with the British. 'With this aim in mind he selected the Harijans upliftment programme which had both political and social character.'<sup>51</sup>

Here his views are contradictory. On the one hand he says that Gandhi deviated his attention from the political path to social problems in order to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie and on the other he says that it was a clear thought out political strategy to overcome the existing critical situation. Can we consider it as a strategy adopted to overcome the political crisis which indirectly benefited the bourgeois?

E.M.S. analyses the change in Gandhian leadership during the period of the Congress ministries. After retiring from active politics, while the Civil Disobedience was going on, Gandhi devoted his energy in the constructive programme. But when the Congress ministries were formed in 1937 Gandhi made certain change in his policy. E.M.S. considers it as a new phase of Gandhian leadership: - 'even though he remained outside

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126

the Congress officially, he was there as an important guiding force behind the various Congress ministries.<sup>52</sup>

Another historian of this field was Hiren Mukerjee. He also dealt with certain limitations of Gandhism. In his opinion Gandhi feared that once the working class enters the field the movement will go out of the limits of the Indian bourgeoisie. But at the same time he did not want to argue that Gandhi was the conscious and willing tool of the bourgeoisie – “Gandhi was perhaps no conscious tool in the bourgeoisie’s hands, but for his entire predilection for ‘civil revolution’ whatever that might precisely mean, his objective and that of the Indian bourgeoisie basically coincided.”<sup>53</sup>

Considering the causes for the failure of the Non-cooperation movement, he says that “It is clear that Gandhi and his colleagues feared and disliked the awakening activity and militancy of the masses. This, indeed, was a principal reason of the failure of the non-cooperation.”<sup>54</sup> That is why, while awakening the masses against the imperialists, he tried to contain their activities so as to avoid their independent actions which

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143

<sup>53</sup> Hiren Mukerjee, *Gandhiji – A Study*, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, p.61

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73

would endanger the existing social relations, which was in favour of the bourgeoisie. Pointing out the contradictory character of Gandhi he said: “...this man who spoke out so magnificently against the exploitation of India’s masses largely did what the exploiting interests wanted.”<sup>55</sup>

Hiren Mukerjee didn’t try to undermine the political activities of Gandhi. He also considers him as the only leader who succeeded in waking up Indians from their deep slumber. But with his methods Gandhi restricted the revolutionary aspects of the national movement. He didn’t consider that India could have been free by the Gandhian methods of Satyagraha alone, without the support of other factors. When comparing the views of the already mentioned Marxist scholars he is not trying to give exaggerated importance to the bourgeois character of the Gandhian leadership.

Madhu Dandavate analyzed the differences between Marxism and Gandhism. According to him, in Marxism, violence occupies an important position but Gandhism was based on the principle of non-violence.<sup>56</sup>

Madhu Dandavate considers the effectiveness of non-violent struggles in involving a wider section in the movement. He says “Gandhi

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73

<sup>56</sup> Madhu Dandavate, *Marx and Gandhi*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1977, p. 49

learnt from his experience that in violent revolutions there is no involvement of the widest sections of the people...on the other hand, the non-violent struggles of Gandhi's conception draw vast sections of the population within the ambit of struggle either directly or indirectly."<sup>57</sup> But Dandavate did not want to consider that the technique of Satyagraha would work effectively under dictatorial systems.

Irfan Habib holds a somewhat different view about Gandhism, than the already mentioned Marxist scholars. He considers Gandhi as a modern thinker. Gandhi was well acquainted with western thoughts and it had a very important impact on his methods than the Indian traditions had on him.

Habib says that with the coming of Gandhi national movement entered into an important phase. He considers Gandhi as a bourgeois but 'the aim of his political and social stratagem was directed in a different way.'<sup>58</sup> According to him 'even though the content of Gandhian thought was against imperialism and capitalism, his aim was not up to socialism. Therefore, in essence, he confined himself to a bourgeois framework.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50 - 51

<sup>58</sup> Irfan Habib, '*Gandhiyum Deshiya Prasthanavum Muthal Socialisathe Kuriculla Marxian Sidhantam Vare*' (in Malayalam), Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 1996, p.18

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18

Irfan Habib tries to vindicate the policies adopted by Gandhi in the Kheda Satyagraha, Ahmedabad mill strike by saying that 'even a great Marxist also has to make compromises if the situation asks for that.'<sup>60</sup>

He considers that Gandhiji played an important part in giving Congress a left orientation.<sup>61</sup> On the ground that he accepted the Karachi resolution and with that he accepted the promises which the Congress had given to peasantry and trade union. But like most of the Marxist thinkers he also believes that the call for 'Quit India' was a wrong decision made at a wrong time.

His view that Gandhi gave a left orientation to Congress was entirely different from the views of other Marxist scholars. Most of the Marxist historians believe that Gandhi was trying to give much importance to the right wing elements and to their interests and policies and Gandhi tried to contain the growth of left ideology.

Bhagwan Josh, apart from all these already mentioned Marxist scholars tried to analyze the Gandhian leadership in a completely different manner. Even though he also belongs to the Marxist school he in his analysis provided a different outlook.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24

According to him the politics of Gandhian era can be best understood through the paradigm of mass movements, the external thrust of which is non-violence. His view is that Gandhi adopted a different method of struggle on the basis of his conception of the colonial state. “Gandhi was convinced that without the consent of the Indians it was almost impossible for the British to rule India with the help of armed forces.”<sup>62</sup>

Bhagwan Josh adopted concepts of Gramsci in analyzing the Gandhian strategy.<sup>63</sup> According to which Gandhi was fighting a different kind of war – ‘the war of position’. The strategy of the pre-Gandhian phase of Indian National Movement was that of a constitutional opposition. Gandhi evolved a new paradigm to confront the colonial state, the character of which was a ‘semi-hegemonic’<sup>64</sup> type, the paradigm of peaceful movements “Here was a strategy which was neither insurrectionary, nor constitutionalist. In the language of Marxism it was

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<sup>62</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47*, Vol. II 1934 -1941, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 50

<sup>63</sup> According to I. D. Gaur from 1985 onwards the neo Marxists (Bipan Chandra and Bhagwan Josh) appropriate Gramsci’s concepts for the analytical explanation of Gandhi. See I. D. Gaur, *op. cit.*, p.99

<sup>64</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *op. cit.*, p. 51

neither 'revolutionary' nor 'reformist' but a strategy of 'revolutionary reformism', or the transformation of the state."<sup>65</sup>

According to him Gandhi was a permanent non-constitutionalist and occupied a far more complex position between the left and right fringes. With his position Gandhiji succeeded 'in keeping left-right unity and in extending its social base by united anti-imperialist mobilization.'<sup>66</sup>

Bhagwan Josh adopted concepts of Gramsci while analyzing the political movements organized by Gandhi and he tried to equate it with a war of position. In his analyses he failed to find out the autonomous roots of Gandhi's non-violence as an ideology. Gramsci's concepts were made in a different context. So actually Bhagwan Josh decontextualised the Gramscian revolutionary concepts.

Bipan Chandra tried to theorize the techniques adopted by Gandhi. He follows a some what objective approach while dealing with the effectiveness of Gandhian method of struggle. According to him the method Gandhi adopted was on the basis of his understanding of the semi hegemonic character of the colonial state.

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57

According to him, political passivity of the masses was a basic factor in the stability and safety of colonial rule. In order to carry out the struggle successfully the masses had to be mobilized. And Gandhi tried to do this: “A major objective of the movements of the Gandhian era was to bring the masses into active politics and political action.”<sup>67</sup>

He views that even though Gandhi based his entire politics on the militancy and self-sacrificing spirit he too attained a little success in mobilizing the masses completely – “I may hazard the opinion that the agricultural labourers and poor peasants in most parts of the country and the masses in general in several parts were not brought into the political process or even touched by nationalist politics, so that the social base of the national movement was still not very strong in 1947.”<sup>68</sup>

Bipan Chandra described Gandhian strategy as Struggle-Truce-Struggle.<sup>69</sup> According to him Gandhian strategy was based on the assumption that a mass movement could not be carried on for a long time because the masses involved in the movement invariably got exhausted

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<sup>67</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement- The Long Term Dynamics*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1993, p.24

<sup>68</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1996, p.130

<sup>69</sup> Earlier in 1972 he described this strategy as pressure-Compromise-Pressure (P-C-P). He says that at that time he was trying to make the initial break with existing Marxian analysis and was therefore not able to get rid of all the cobwebs. See Bipan Chandra, *Indian...*, p.29

after some time. So they need a “breathing time” to consolidate, recuperate and gather strength for the next round of struggle. Thus the withdrawal or a shift forms an inherent part of a strategy of political action that was based on the masses. But he says that the critics of Gandhian leadership failed in understanding the strategic design of Gandhian method of struggle and that is why they often criticized Gandhi for this type of withdrawals – “...they have looked for sources of decisions regarding withdrawals in class bias or essence, class pressure, betrayal, tendency to compromise with imperialism, loss of nerve, moral compunction, etc., and not in strategic design itself.”<sup>70</sup>

Bipan Chandra considers the constructive work also as a part of the overall Gandhian strategy. “It played a crucial role during the ‘passive phase’ in filling the political space left vacant by the withdrawal of Civil Disobedience...”<sup>71</sup>

Unlike other Marxist writers, Bhagwan Josh and Bipan Chandra analyzed various aspects of Gandhism in a very liberal manner. Bipan Chandra was not interested in criticizing the bourgeois leadership, as the other Marxists scholars did. But at the same time he too believes like

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37

other Marxists that actions of masses were restricted by the top order, which was under the influence of the bourgeoisie.

According to Marxists, Indian National Movement was a bourgeois led movement and Gandhi as a bourgeois leader. But, it is to be analyzed in detail before agreeing with the Marxists that Gandhi designed his method of struggle to suit the vested interests of the bourgeoisie. Even while criticizing the class character of the movement, A.R. Desai also identifies the progressive role of bourgeoisie in a colonial state like India. It is also because of their understanding of the progressive role of the bourgeoisie which led them to adopt a United Front Policy in 1930s. This shows the importance of the support of bourgeoisie in leading a movement against imperialism.

Another aspect which the Marxist scholars stressed was mass mobilization. Even though they consider Gandhi was the first leader who successfully mobilized the masses they argue that the role assigned to them limited the independent actions of the masses. The actions of masses were restricted from the top. And because of that the entire political activities confined within the bourgeois leadership.

Was it possible for a country like India to fight against imperialism by adopting violent methods? And how far was it possible to mobilize every section of the society by giving equal importance to their interest, all of which have contradictory interests? What would be an effective alternative leadership to Gandhian leadership? – were some of the questions that the Marxists failed in critically analyzing.

### **SECTION C: SUBALTERN PERSPECTIVES**

The history written by Subalternist historians is different from the elitist historiography. Subalternist's demand the "de-elitization" of history. It assumes that the elitist bias, open or insidious, has placed history at the service of the dominant or hegemonic classes and banished the rest from history or rendered them aphonic. Subalternist historians claim that their analysis is entirely different from the elitist historiography. In some of its analysis it stands close to Marxist type. Marxists and Subalternists enjoy a somewhat similar view regarding the importance of the Gandhian leadership and also about the role assigned to the common people in the National movement. Subalternist historians in their work gave importance to the attitude of the common people towards the movement and the rural base of the movement. So they took local

issues, which were confined, to a particular region to show the spontaneous nature of the movement. While the nationalist leaders trying to give importance to the educated elites in organizing and leading the movement there by considering the common people as passive elements, the Marxists were of the opinion that the mass mobilization was not at the initiative of the educated upper class alone but a response coming from the socio-economic structure of the colonial Indian society. But the Subalternists tried to depict how the traditional, religious, conservative, orthodox community reacted against the exploitation and they tried to analyze the influence of the nationalist ideology with their narrow outlook.

Ranajit Guha in his introductory essay in *Subaltern Studies I* criticized the nationalist historians' view that the entire movement was organized at the behest of the educated urban intelligentsia and it was these people who mobilized the masses. According to him "The history of Indian nationalism is thus written up as a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite."<sup>72</sup> In Guha's opinion the elitist historiography failed to find out "the contribution made by the people on their own, that is, independently of the elite to the making and development of this

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<sup>72</sup> Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, (reprint), p.2

nationalism.”<sup>73</sup> He says that the politics of the people “was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its significance depend on the latter.”<sup>74</sup> (Here one has to consider whether the breaking of the limit set by the politician and elites can be taken as an autonomous domain). In fact, Ranajit Guha forcefully argued that “one-sided and blinkered historiography” which projected Indian nationalism as “a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite” has “failed to explain Indian nationalism for us.” That is elitist historiography failed to understand the problem of mobilization. His main reproach against the elitist historiography is that it fails to admit or record the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation.<sup>75</sup> The Subalternist historians’ claim that the mass mobilization took place not just because of the activities of the elite. They want to consider it as a spontaneous development or independent of any outside manipulation. Sumit Sarkar says that “The ‘Cambridge’ assumption that factions explain everything since local ‘patrons’ have a kind of inherent and automatic capacity for mobilizing their ‘clients’, as well as the standard nationalist interpretation in terms of mobilization from the top by the patriotic leaders or ideologies

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

share in common a serious under estimation of the popular initiative.”<sup>76</sup>  
 According to Gyan Pandey “... many of the most important peasant insurrections in the country were largely autonomous and that the intervention of ‘outside’ leaders was a marginal and often, a late phenomenon.”<sup>77</sup>

But one will find it very difficult to agree with the view of the Subalternists that the several local movements were spontaneous. We can’t deny the fact that it was this educated upper class who gave political education to the rural masses and it was these people who took the initiative in waking them up from their deep slumber, it was they who taught the people to react against the domination. But the way they acted, the way they interpreted the ideology of these elites were different and once they were initiated they did everything according to their independent thought but even then it was restricted from the top.

Gyan Pandey in his article, ‘Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism, 1919-1922’ which deals with the revolt of the peasants of Awadh, comments on certain limitations of Gandhism, the ‘anti-peasant’ attitude

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<sup>76</sup> Sumit Sarkar, ‘The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-Co-operation, c. 1905-22’ in Ranajit Guha edited *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. III, pp.276-277.

<sup>77</sup> Gyan Pandey, ‘Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism: The Peasant Movement in Awadh, 1919-22, in Ranajit Guha edited, *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982, p.151.

of Gandhi and the instructions that he had given to the peasants to be followed while participating in a movement.<sup>78</sup>

Faith in Mahatma gave the peasants strength to question the might of their planters and landlords. The reverence for Gandhi is undoubtedly partly due to the belief that he has great influence with the government. The peasants believed that Gandhi was sent by the government to remove the grievances of the peasant. "The curious thing is that as a general rule Gandhi is not thought of as being antagonistic to Government, but only to the zamindars."<sup>79</sup> What Gyan Pandey wants to point out here is that the contradiction between what Gandhi stood for and what peasants thought about him. So the support of the peasants to Gandhi was not because of that he was against the colonial authority but because of the belief that he came to emancipate the peasants from the clutches of their overlords. Peasants' immediate oppressors were zamindars. But what actually Gandhi wanted to do was a class collaboration of peasants and zamindars.

The stand that Gandhi adopted while dealing with the confrontation between the peasant and landlords is much debatable. After the outbreak of violence at various places, Gandhi sought to restore peace by asking

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157,160,187.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197

the peasants to surrender voluntarily. But no corresponding sacrifice was demanded of the landlords. It indicated in Gandhi's view, "...the peasant bore the responsibility for the preservation of non violence and for its breakdown in any situation of clash with the authorities."<sup>80</sup> Gandhi himself asked the peasants to bear a little if the zamindars torment them and not to fight against the zamindars. Because, they, Gandhi and other Congress leaders, did not want to encourage such class struggles and they were of the opinion that such struggles should be abandoned altogether in the interests of 'unity' in their struggle against the British.<sup>81</sup> But it is obvious that the landlords and officials stood shoulder to shoulder against the peasants. Yet, the Congress sought the support of the landlords in their struggle against the British.

Actually Pandey was trying to find out the 'anti-peasant' attitude of Gandhi in the instructions which he had given to the peasant. In his opinion Gandhi was trying to make the peasants speak for zamindars and Gandhi was not interested in dealing with the questions regarding the problems of peasantry. Marxist historians argued that Gandhi made only lip service to the peasantry and he never gave any serious concern for the

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157

<sup>81</sup> Gyan Pandey says that in the traditional nationalist historiography the sectional struggles "of peasants and workers and other labouring and exploited classes were out of step with the primary need of the 'nation' at that stage in its history – the need to advance the anti- imperialist movement." *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

grievances of the peasantry. But they failed to analyze whether the existing environment is conducive to start such a struggle at a time when the anti-imperialist movement was gaining its strength.

But whatever be the attitude of Gandhi towards peasants the presence of Gandhi and rumours regarding the achievements of Gandhi in Champaran formed a source of inspiration for the Awadh peasants during early 1920s. Yet, one must not exaggerate the role of the urban politician in the growth of the national movement. The peasants acted independently on the basis of their own understanding of Gandhism and interpretation of Swaraj. "From the standpoint of many an Awadh peasant in the 1920s, we would suggest, there was a Gandhi different from the one we know and promise of Swaraj also different from the one that we do not so much know as assume."<sup>82</sup>

Shahid Amin gives us an idea about the 'Mahatma' that percolated into the region before Gandhi's visit by examining Gorakhpur district of Eastern U.P. during the winter and spring of 1921. In his work *Event, Metaphor, Memory, Chauri Chaura 1922 – 1992*, he tried to analyze peasant politics and Gandhian nationalism.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188

<sup>83</sup> Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor Memory Chauri Chaura 1922-1992*, Oxford

Gandhi visited the Gorakhpur district on February 8, 1921 and he did not stay there for any length of time to lead or influence a political movement of the peasantry. “Gandhi, the person, was in this particular locality for less than a day, but the ‘Mahatma’ as an idea was thought out and reworked in popular imagination in subsequent months.”<sup>84</sup>

It was during the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 the unofficial canonization of Gandhi began in North India. There started spreading so many rumours about the powers of Gandhi. And people believed that Gandhi came to release peasants from the planters and there was no need to obey the planters any more. This belief gave them a moral strength to question the highest authorities.

Shahid Amin criticized the nationalist attitude towards the ordinary people or ‘Sadharan Janta’. In his view “To behold the Mahatma in person and become his devotees was the only role assigned to them, while it was for the urban intelligentsia and fulltime Congress activists to convert this groundswell of popular feeling into an organized movement. Thus it would appear that, even in the relationship between the peasant

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University Press, Delhi, 1995

<sup>84</sup> Shahid Amin, ‘Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-2’ in Ranajit Guha, edited, *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. III, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, p.2

devotee and their Mahatma, there was room for political mediation by the economically better-off and socially more powerful of his followers.”<sup>85</sup>

Amin did not want to give too much importance to Gandhi’s charisma which moved people. According to him giving too much importance to Gandhi’s charisma is as if we are denying the fact that how the people modified it according to their imagination. “To talk about the charisma of Gandhi should not be to limit oneself to analyzing the outward attributes of this charisma but, more importantly, to track its career in popular imagination and thereby to grant a certain dignity to the popular mind.”<sup>86</sup> He says that popular singers and their audiences do not passively accept even the folklores. They change it or modify it into such a fashion as to match their own specific style. But for an outsider it looks like a distortion or misunderstanding.

According to him similar thing had happened in the case of the stories regarding the works of Gandhi. The people of Gorakhpur made several stories about the powers of Gandhi according to their own imagination which was based on whatever they heard about the work of

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<sup>85</sup> Shahid Amin, ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’, in Robin Jeffrey edited *India Rebellion to Republic Selected Writings 1857-1990*, Sterling Publisher Private Limited, New Delhi, 1990, p. 86

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86-87

Gandhi in other parts of the country. Once they heard the news of Gandhi's forthcoming visit to Gorakhpur the rumours started spreading in a rigorous speed. The local press also played their part in spreading the news.

The rumours about Gandhi reveals, "What people thought of the Mahatma were projections of existing patterns of popular belief about the 'worship of worthies' in rural North India."<sup>87</sup> The peasant perception of Gandhian ideas and Swaraj is very much discernible from the rumours which spread during this time. "Indeed their ideas about Gandhi's 'orders' and 'powers' were often at variance with those of the local Congress – Khilafat leadership and clashed with the basic tenets of Gandhism itself. The violence at Chauri Chaura was rooted in this paradox."<sup>88</sup>

After violence took place at Chauri Chaura Gandhi and Congress leadership tried to disavow themselves from the incident. Amin criticized Gandhi and Congress leaders for not contextualizing the riot within any kind of political activity. What they did was that "they sought to delimit 'true' Congress politics by distancing the organization at Gorakhpur from the acts of their Chauri Chaura volunteers weeks before they turned into

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93

<sup>88</sup> Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi ...', p. 55

so-called criminals.”<sup>89</sup> To consider the rioters as anti-Gandhian is not correct. Chauri Chaura incident “was an act of nationalist indiscipline caused by the absence of proper Congress leadership.”<sup>90</sup> According to him to consider the rioters as criminal or hooligans is totally misleading. They committed violence because of their wrong belief that Gandhi’s Swaraj had already come in to existence. He accuses Gandhi and local leaders for creating an atmosphere where such beliefs held sway. But he failed in explaining why Gandhi, a person who believed so much in truth, let the people to fabricate stories about his powers and why he never tried to stop them? Or whether we can consider it as a tactics of a very clever politician? While constructing social history, Amin failed to find out the political aspects of the movement and its implications upon the ongoing national movement.

Like Shahid Amin, Sumit Sarkar is also trying to analyze the part played by the rumours. He suggests three moments in the emergence of a charismatic leader like Gandhi. According to him, the rumours fall into three main categories. First, there is his acceptance as an avatar, or a being

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<sup>89</sup> Shahid Amin, *Event...*, p.110

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50

with extra ordinary power. Second, he is seen to confer immunity to his followers. And third, there is a call for total transformation of the world.<sup>91</sup>

Sumit Sarkar feels “that religious dimension is vital for an understanding of at least four crucial features of popular movements in the early Gandhian era: the nature and significance of rumour, the ethical norms and ritual obligations imposed by the emerging cult of Gandhi, the mood of renunciation and sacrifice evoked by the Mahatma, and the persistence of faith in him despite repeated instances of hopes deferred or frustrated”<sup>92</sup> and religious dimension can perhaps help us “to understand why despite so many ‘betrayals’ Gandhi could retain so much more authority among the peasant masses than was ever enjoyed by his radical Left critics.”<sup>93</sup>

According to Sumit Sarkar, it was because of his religious appeal that Gandhi got so much support from the masses which his left counterparts failed in getting. And from this it appears that it was because of lack of religious appeal that the leftists didn’t get much support from the masses. And from his arguments, it seems that Gandhi was correct in

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<sup>91</sup> See Sumit Sarkar, ‘The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy’, Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, pp. 310-312

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316

making a religious appeal. Even though he is trying to limit the role of Gandhi as a politician from his arguments it feels that Gandhi was an efficient politician who knows how to make an appeal to the illiterate masses. Religion played a very important role in the life of Indian especially in the life of illiterate rural masses and in order to array them against the foreign domination Gandhi touched the religious sentiments of these masses.

But he praised Gandhi's tactics and knack in making a political move in understanding the feeling of the people. "What we have to understand are the deeper factors underlying the new popular mood of August 1942, which Gandhi certainly sensed and reflected incomparably better than the Communists with their theoretically not unjustifiable people's war line."<sup>94</sup>

According to Sumit Sarkar, the basic Gandhian style of leading a movement was, "...drawing-in the masses, while at the same time keeping mass activity strictly pegged down to certain forms, pre-determined by the leader, and above all to the methods of non-violence."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885 – 1947*, Macmillan India Limited, Madras, 1986, p. 391

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.179

Like Marxist scholar he gave importance to economic factors which led to the rise of mass movements. In Champaran and Kheda Gandhi entered only in later stage. He says, "There is ample evidence in both cases of discontent and protest long before the coming of the Mahatma."<sup>96</sup> According to him at Kheda "...collective refusals to pay the revenue had become increasingly common well before the entry of Gandhi."<sup>97</sup> He also points out the post world war inflation and the rising prices which affected almost all sections of Indian population. And the elite politicians successfully utilized this discontent.<sup>98</sup> According to him the economic factors rallied people behind mahatma rather than the image and the teachings of Gandhi.

Compared to other Subalternist historians Sumit Sarkar is keeping a some what balanced view. He did not give undue importance to spontaneous nature of the movement. "The peasants still needed to be represented by a saviour from above – a crucial limitation which is perhaps at times underestimated by some recent scholars who, reacting against elite historiography, tend to somewhat romanticize the

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 156

<sup>98</sup> Sumit Sarkar, 'The Conditions ...', pp. 286-287

spontaneous revolutionary potential of the rural masses.”<sup>99</sup> This view is completely against the view of Gyan Pandey who believes that peasant movements originated independently with out any support of the outside leader.

Subalternist historians have contributed immensely to the re-writing of Indian history. They give importance to the writing of social history. They mostly deal with the peasant revolt and peasant movements. For them rumours are a means of mobilization. They claim that existing historical works totally ignored the rural population or the subalterns. Their effort to write people’s history is a positive move. But most of them are as much biased as the nationalist historians in dealing with the subject. Nationalist historians overemphasized the role of the leaders in the movement, on the other hand Subalternist historians overemphasized the role of the masses in the movement. From their writings it seems that they are interested in denying the influence of Gandhi on the vast classes of Indian poor. Their view is acceptable only if they gave due importance to the influence of Gandhi and also to the role played by the masses. Otherwise it may form a partial history of the Indian Freedom Movement.

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<sup>99</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Modern ...*, p. 182

## SECTION D: OTHER WORKS

Judith Brown's *Gandhi's Rise to Power – Indian Politics 1915-1922*, is an effort to trace Gandhi's emergence as a leader during the period, 1915-22. Her attempt is to see the changes that were brought about by him and his "role in politics and to see what forces of change he was either creating or exploiting."<sup>100</sup>

Brown says that Gandhi during his political career in South Africa "rarely delegated responsibility for the organization and preferred to rely on his own influence and actions."<sup>101</sup> According to her, one of the reasons for Gandhi's refusal to link the Champaran struggle with conventional politics was "If he threw his lot with a particular political group he would be sucked into the vortex of political alliances, and his independence would vanish."<sup>102</sup> She holds that it was the charismatic leadership of Gandhi which appealed in almost messianic terms to those at the very bottom of society."<sup>103</sup> In Kaira Gandhi worked on two main lines "external publicity and internal consolidation"<sup>104</sup> and a "tightly knit band

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<sup>100</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power – Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972, p. xiv

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101

of associates” formed the spearhead of his movement.<sup>105</sup> In both Champaran and Kaira “Gandhi took up an issue which was comprehensible and important to peasant cultivators, basing his campaign of support in the villages, while articulating rural discontent through the better and educated urban groups, who had some overt political awareness and public expertise. His strength lay in being the mediator between these groups.”<sup>106</sup>

On the issue of Rowlatt Bills Gandhi’s ‘subcontractors’ failed him because Satyagraha threatened their basic local interests. By mid 1919 he had no reliable group of subcontractors. Hence he involved in an alliance with the Muslims.<sup>107</sup> The observance of ‘Khilafat Day’ shows “the extent to which Gandhi had begun to create and tap a network of organization and loyalty by his espousal of a Muslim cause...”<sup>108</sup>

Gandhi depended much on his ‘subcontractors’ for the success of the movements he organized. Thus Gujarat and Bihar where Gandhi had “built up a local reputation and a network of sub-contractors, swung powerfully into all-India politics for the first time solidly in support of

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199

him” during the Non-cooperation Movement.<sup>109</sup> Gandhi’s dependence on the ‘subcontractors’ was considered as weakness for Gandhi and Congress, because they entered the movement to “improve their position in their local power structure.”<sup>110</sup> Judith Brown describes three types of ‘sub-contractors’ upon whom Gandhi depended. At the top were the western educated elite. Below them were the men educated either in the vernacular or in English, small town lawyers, traders, village priests etc. According to Brown this second tier of sub-contractors are extremely important as it was “on their reaction Gandhi’s power stood or fell.” Beneath them were the real ‘masses’ of India, the illiterate, low-paid workers and the unemployed of town and countryside. From this ‘lower class people’ Gandhi in fact elicited no truly political response.<sup>111</sup> Her work denied the role of the masses whom “the Mahatma activated, and whose participation was too significant to be ignored.”<sup>112</sup>

Judith Brown’s *Gandhi and Civil disobedience movement: The Mahatma in Indian politics 1928 – 34* traces Gandhi’s career from the Calcutta Congress session in the last days of 1928, when he was refashioned as a potential all India leader, to the Bombay congress

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 343-345

<sup>112</sup> I.D. Gaur, *op. cit.*, p.119

October 1934, when again Gandhi withdraw from active politics. The primary aim of the book was to chart “Gandhi’s personal political career in one of its most remarkable phase.”<sup>113</sup> This is its main drawback. In the words of Christopher Baker the work is a “Political biography rather than a political history arranged around a biography.”<sup>114</sup>

Judith Brown’s study of “Gandhi’s role as civil disobedience leader in the 1930’s investigates a particular example of the phenomenon of continental political leadership.”<sup>115</sup> It was during the phase from 1928 – 34 “occurred the creation of his new continental leadership position, the exercise of that leadership role, and its disintegration as the context changed and Gandhi could no longer perform the functions which had been his passport to prominence. It shows that Gandhi’s leadership position was no static phenomenon but one which altered over time as the context changed and his peculiar ambition and aptitudes meshed with and served the interests of other people and groups.”<sup>116</sup>

By the end of 1930 the campaign had been crushed. In order “to sustain his all India leadership position, Gandhi had to play the role of

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<sup>113</sup> Judith Brown’s, *Gandhi and Civil disobedience : The Mahatma In Indian Politics 1928 – 34*, Cambridge University Press , London, 1977, p. xvi

<sup>114</sup> Christopher Baker, ‘Reviews’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. II No.3, 1977, p.469

<sup>115</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi...*, p. xvi

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xvi – xvii

negotiator. He had to translate the gains of agitation into a negotiating position and secure a peace which would satisfy the diverse aspirations of the groups which had participated in civil disobedience for reasons only partially connected with his own political intentions.<sup>117</sup>

Gandhi's Irwin Pact probably marked the peak of Gandhi's political influence and prestige in India.<sup>118</sup> But by the end of 1934 Gandhi recognized that "he could no longer act as continental leader in the role of civil disobedience 'expert'".<sup>119</sup>

Judith Brown considers Gandhi as a politician who could "rarely attract support directly" and due to this he depended on "the support of key intermediaries who brought their clients, associates and followers to his political campaigns".<sup>120</sup>

The study is based on all available primary sources on the topic both in Delhi and London and details every minute aspect of the period it deals with. The approach is largely similar to that of her first book.

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385

In both the works Judith Brown took two important periods in the political career of Mahatma Gandhi and tried to analyze the factors that made possible Gandhi's emergence as a 'Continental leader' and his dependence on the 'Sub – contractors' for his leadership. Even though it was well referenced and detailed work of these periods it is inadequate. She uncritically subscribed to the elite – based analysis of history developed by the Cambridge historians. Gandhi was projected as a leader who always depended on the 'sub-contractors', 'key intermediaries' or 'interest groups' for his success. In the whole narration the Indian National Movement became a movement of these intermediaries and this belittles Gandhi's leadership qualities.

*Gandhism: An Analysis*, written by P. Spratt was the first psycho analytical study on Gandhi, written from a point of view of qualified Marxism. In his book, Spratt tried to give an account of Gandhi's mental development from his childhood days to fully developed Mahatma.

Spratt argues that Gandhi was abnormally sensual during his childhood in comparison with other children.<sup>121</sup> By the end of his stay in England, he became clear in his mind that he was a reformer.<sup>122</sup> The

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<sup>121</sup> P. Spratt, *Gandhism: An Analysis*, Huxley Press, Madras, 1939, p. 11

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17

experiences that he had had in his home town, after coming back from England, changed the direction of his life. It marked a phase of rapid development in his life.<sup>123</sup> Gandhi entered on a career of public service in South Africa but still regarded his political work only a part of his public activity.<sup>124</sup> The change that took place in Gandhi's life from the age of 28<sup>th</sup> onwards transformed him from a successful westernized barrister to something like a mediaeval ascetic.<sup>125</sup>

Spratt holds that his case seems to conform to the Freudian pattern. Gandhi's thrift, his interest in sanitation, and other peculiarities, can be accounted for in the orthodox way. "His relation with his father suggests a hidden conflict. His sudden emancipation from his youthful inhibitions occurred soon after the death of his mother. His independence, his refusal ever to be in opposition or to another's leadership are characteristic results of this conflict."<sup>126</sup>

According to him "enthusiastic psychoanalysts might see sadism at the root of his whole policy: the rigorous regime to which he subjects the inmates of his Ashram, his ultimate aim – the maximum simplification of

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92

life, and his method of Satyagraha – suffering and sacrifice as the universal panacea.”<sup>127</sup>

According to Spratt Gandhi’s experiences in England had probably had the effect of increasing his admiration for “what can be called the bourgeois ideal of character and conduct.”<sup>128</sup> Spratt argues that “Nearly all that is needed for a typical modern feudal bourgeois dictatorship can be found in Mr. Gandhi’s ideas.”<sup>129</sup> Gandhi’s non-violence, with the rest of his propaganda, is primarily that of the bourgeois asserting himself against mediaevalism.<sup>130</sup>

Gandhi, in 1916, said that he was not a socialist, in 1925 he gave expression to a guarded approval of socialism and after 1934 when socialism became popular in India he began to call himself a socialist. Spratt attributes this change of attitude not to vulgar opportunism but to Gandhi’s “sensitiveness to feelings and thought of the community.”<sup>131</sup> According to him, Gandhi followed a policy of conciliation and repression towards socialism.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 482

Erik H. Erikson's book, *Gandhi's Truth – On The Origins Of Militant Non violence* in his own words, “describes a Westerner’s and a Psycho analyst’s search for the historical presence of Mahatma Gandhi and for the meaning of what is called Truth.”<sup>133</sup> He intended the subtitle “militant non-violence to provide a substitute clear English term for Gandhi’s word “Satyagraha”.<sup>134</sup> The book attempts a detailed psycho analytical study of Gandhi from his early childhood to middle age when he got involved in the Ahmedabad mill strike in 1918. It is a sophisticated exploration of the psychological importance of Gandhi’s non-violence and the study has no precedent whatever in writings on psycho analysis.<sup>135</sup>

The study is based on Erikson’s belief that “What was described by him (Gandhi) and by some biographers as a mere episode in his life – and in Indian history was, in fact, an event of vital importance in his advent as a national leader and as the originator of militant non-violence.”<sup>136</sup> To Erikson the “strike (the Ahmedabad mill strike) and fast represented a

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<sup>133</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth – On The Origins Of Militant Nonviolence*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, 1969, p.9

<sup>134</sup> Erikson told this to Gene sharp. See Gene sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist – With Essays On Ethics and Politics*, Porter Sargent Publishers, INC., Boston, 1979, p.24

<sup>134</sup> Dennis Dalton, ‘Whose Gandhi?’, *South Asian Review*, Vol. 3, No.4, July 1970, p. 360.

<sup>136</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *op. cit.*, P. 10

demonstrable crisis in the middle age of great man".<sup>137</sup> Erikson feels that Gandhi's *Autobiography* plays down the Ahmedabad episode.<sup>138</sup> But we know that Gandhi's interest in the past only is so far as it held any importance to the present and future. It is important to note here that his trade union activities were confined only to Ahmedabad and he never extended it to other parts of India.

According to Erikson, "from his childhood in Rajkot to his maturity in Indian politics, he (Gandhi) would never "play" unless he was in a position of such moral dominance that he could convince himself and others that the power game of his mediator ship was "for their own good." And (not unimportantly) is often turned out to be just that."<sup>139</sup>

Erikson explains why Gandhi tried to become "more maternal than the most motherly of mothers" as "neither Moniya, nor Mohan nor the Mahatma could ever face the "natural superiority of women."<sup>140</sup> He tries to find the base for the development of Gandhi's attitude towards the depressed classes in his childhood days. Thus, when Gandhi appointed himself his father's nurse, "there was a drive in it which later would

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111

suffice for the care of all India as well as of Untouchables and lepers, of mankind as well as of an ashram.”<sup>141</sup>

To Erikson Gandhi was an “inveterate ritualizer.” Thus it seems that “the political meaning of Gandhi’s identification with his mother: the maternal side of Bapu (“the father”, as he was later called) attracted particular types of followers and inspired particular trends in the masses: almost as though he had provided in his own person a new matrix, had become India herself. But this could not come to friction until he integrated equally well his father’s stubborn integrity and Bania pragmatism.”<sup>142</sup>

Erikson concludes his work with the words: “when I began this book, I did not expect to rediscover psychoanalysis in terms of truth, self-suffering and non-violence. But now that I have done so, I see better what I hope the reader has come to see with me, namely, that I felt attracted to the Ahmedabad Event not only because I had learned to know the scene and not only because it was time for me to write about the responsibilities

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157

of middle age, but also because I sensed an affinity between Gandhi's truth and the insights of modern psychology."<sup>143</sup>

The history of the origins of Gandhi's truth and nonviolence can be supplemented by the insights of psycho analysis. Erikson took an insignificant 'Event' – the Ahmedabad episode – for the work and totally disregarded other movements - Champaran, Rowlatt Satyagraha, and Non-cooperation movement. Only an analysis of these movements can throw light on the emergence of Gandhi as a national leader. The work says nothing about Gandhi as a nationalist political leader.

Bhikhu Parekh in his work *Colonialism, Tradition and Reforms: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse* tried to examine Gandhi's critical dialogue with tradition, his style of reform, his critique of and campaign against unacceptable beliefs and practices, and the manner in which he negotiated his way around and was sometimes defeated by its structural constraints.<sup>144</sup> Parekh analysis how Gandhi saw himself as a *yugapurusha* led his people from a *yuga* of darkness and bondage into one of truth and freedom.<sup>145</sup> Gandhi who knew how to tap and mobilize the

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 439 - 440

<sup>144</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p.13

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

regenerative resources of the tradition, “reduced tradition to a resource, located its essence in its general values which commanded respect but left room for critical evaluation, and gave every individual the freedom to draw upon insights of other traditions.”<sup>146</sup>

Parekh shows that how Gandhi while remaining rooted in his own tradition reinterpreted in the light of the insights derived from other traditions. Gandhi found the Hindu concept of Ahimsa “negative and passive and reinterpreted it in the light of the Christian concept of *Caritas*.” And as *Caritas* was too emotive and led to other worldly attachments. Gandhi “redefined it in the light of the Hindu concept of *anasakti*.” The double conversion, “Christianization of a Hindu category after suitable Hinduising its Christian components yielded the novel concept of an active and positive but detached an none motive love.”<sup>147</sup>

Bhikhu Parekh holds that Gandhi had an extremely difficult task while reforming and reinterpreting the tradition as “he had to defend the integrity of the tradition against supercilious British criticism” and also “the tradition had to be pieced together and patiently reconstructed in a manner that took account of the rationalist challenge.”<sup>148</sup> Gandhi had to

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32

adjust his theory of non-violence “to the inescapable constraints of political life and mass action.”<sup>149</sup>

Terrorists also reinterpreted the Hindu tradition in order to secure support and mobilize the Hindu masses. They derived their theory of violence from the *Gita* in particular and Mahabharata in general.<sup>150</sup> Gandhi was deeply worried about the growing influence of the terrorists. He argued that not violence but non-violence was the central message of the *Gita* and the *Gita* justified violence only under specific conditions. Parekh concludes the dialogue between Gandhi and terrorists by saying that “Gandhi was right and terrorists were wrong.”<sup>151</sup>

Parekh argues that Gandhi took the word *Shakti* and suitably redefined it. Throughout his political life, Gandhi kept exploring ways of ‘releasing’, ‘conserving’ and ‘mobilizing’ popular energy and ‘converting’ and ‘transforming’ it into power or *Shakti*.<sup>152</sup> Gandhi was a man of action and was desperately anxious to acquire the enormous power to secure the desired political and social objectives. Gandhi embarked upon the sexual experiments in order to acquire the kind of moral and

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-154

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173

spiritual power.<sup>153</sup> His experiments were a good example of how he both remained within and radically departed from the Hindu religious tradition. In the words of Parekh “Gandhi re-enacted the great *Krishna-gopi* legend in his life and gave it a wholly new meaning and significance.<sup>154</sup>

Parekh holds that Gandhi radically redefined the four categories of traditional occupations underlying the ancient *varna* system that the latter made no sense.<sup>155</sup> He considers that Gandhi failed to tackle untouchability since he defended the caste system.<sup>156</sup> According to him Gandhi’s campaign permanently discredited untouchability but it could not end the high-caste economic and political domination.<sup>157</sup>

The work is a critical analysis of Gandhi’s role as a social reformer. While presenting the subject, he eulogizes Gandhi and thereby undermined the activities of other figures and movements. This we can see especially in his chapter dealing with the Terrorists and Untouchability. He totally disregards terrorists and leaders like Ambedkar.

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246

**Concluding Remarks:**

The brief historiographic critique enable us to draw some conclusions. It would be clear that the different perspectives are inadequate as we believe that they do not highlight the crucial element that set apart Gandhi-mass mobilization. The writings of the nationalist historians give only an idea about the history of the national movement and the leadership provided by the elite. Their study failed to provide an analysis of Gandhian strategy in which masses played an important role. Though the Marxist historians gave importance to the role of the masses they largely confined their arguments to the characterization of Gandhi as the representative of the bourgeoisie. In their works also a detailed analysis of the Gandhian strategy based on mass mobilization is missing. The Subaltern historians on the other hand explained the success of Gandhian leadership in terms of 'rumours' in which Gandhi had no part to play. As such it also lacks an analysis of political techniques that Gandhi used to mobilize masses.

To Judith Brown, Gandhi was a leader who depended on the 'sub-contractors' for his success. She didn't even consider analyzing Gandhi as a political strategist and his success in mobilizing the largely inert and politically inactive masses.

Insights derived from the works of Psychoanalysts are useful in analyzing the background in which Gandhi developed his political techniques. The works of Cultural historians like Bhikhu Parekh largely confines their study in analyzing the role of tradition in moulding Gandhi's thoughts and actions. Such works also do not detail mass mobilization.

Our intention is to place Gandhi in the historical context of the Indian National Movement in which he played an important part from 1920 onwards. Firstly we try to analyze the context in which Gandhi developed his political strategy. Therefore, the next chapter will be an analysis of the nature of the colonial state under which Gandhi developed his strategy of mass mobilization.

## Chapter- II

### **COLONIAL STATE AND GANDHI'S EMERGENCE**

#### **AS A LEADER OF THE MASSES**

Any strategy is conditioned by and in turn suited to the nature of the state within which it is applied. Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi, followed a strategy which was largely suitable to a semi-hegemonic state like colonial India. In order to contextualize Gandhian strategy an analysis of the nature of the state is required. The present chapter is divided into two sections: Section A- dealing with the nature of the Colonial state; and Section B- dealing with Gandhi's emergence as a national leader and the strategy that he evolved based on his understanding of the nature of the British state in India.

#### **SECTION A: COLONIAL STATE:**

The British state took over the administration of India from the East India Company in 1858. Then onwards, the political system prevalent in Britain influenced the evolution of the Colonial state in India. The moves of the British in India have to be seen against the changing economic process in Britain as well as in Europe.

Changes in the economic needs of the metropolis resulted in the changing forms of colonial state and policy in India. During the initial stages the colonial state which was engaged in widening their Power in India, did not introduce any basic changes in the colony in administration other than military organization and technology.<sup>1</sup> Changed economic scenario in Britain made the Colonial government in India adopt policies to make the colony a subordinate trading partner. They introduced some changes in the economic, social, political, administrative, cultural and ideological setting under the slogan of development and modernization. They introduced Western capitalist legal and judicial system, modern education and started talking about training the colonial people in the arts of democracy and self-government.<sup>2</sup> It was during this stage that the State actively encouraged “some processes of reform, not merely introducing individually significant alterations of the social order, such as in the contentious abolition of Sati; but in establishing the principle that the State had the authority to do such things, a principle without precedent in Indian social history.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, Orient Longman Limited, New Delhi, 1999, p. 63

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65-66

<sup>3</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘The Modern State in India’ in Martin Doornbos and Sudipta Kaviraj, (ed.), *Dynamics of State Formation – India and Europe Compared*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 231

With the emergence of anti-imperialist forces Colonial government intensified its control over the colony both politically and administratively. There developed a tendency to abandon social and cultural 'modernization'. In stead they assumed a neutral stance on social and cultural questions and also began to support social and cultural reaction in the name of preserving indigenous institutions.<sup>4</sup> It was under the guise of political morality that they tried to inflict irreparable damage to the nationalist consolidation.

After the attainment of India by force to consolidate and perpetuate the colony, Britishers had to depend upon the support of the Indians. For which they adopted some measures to collaborate the native people. Rule of law, in a limited sense, was the first to be introduced in India upon which the colonial state itself was to be evolved. The introduction of the rule of law was to have a long term effect on colonial society. It made a deeper impression on the native mind.<sup>5</sup>

The introduction of western education was another step to consolidate their position. The dissemination of colonial ideology and administrative needs were the twin objectives of the education policy of

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<sup>4</sup> Bipan Chandra, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 70

<sup>5</sup> Bhagwan Josh., *Struggle for Hegemony in India- 1920-1947, Vol. II, 1934-41*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 27

the British Government.<sup>6</sup> “Cultural domination often succeeded by making educated Indians all but British in spirit, as Macaulay and other Westernizers wanted.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the introduction of English education was a political necessity for them more than anything else.

The colonial state introduced representative institutions in India slowly and reluctantly. Dalhousie had created the legislative council in 1853 to ascertain official opinion in the presidencies. Later the revolt of 1857 made it clear that without knowing the public opinion it was impossible to legislate the millions. The revolt exposed the alien ness of the ruling group.<sup>8</sup> Any law imposed upon the people without ascertaining public opinion would alienate the people.

After the revolt of 1857, the British government tried to co opt a section of the Indian people and the legislations which followed were attempts in this direction. The Indian council Act of 1861 enlarged the Governor General’s Executive Council which came to be known as Imperial Legislative Council. This council could not discuss the budget or a financial measure or any other important bill without the previous

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>7</sup> Richard G. Fox, *Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1989, pp. 270-71

<sup>8</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation And Its Fragments – Colonial And Post Colonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p.18

approval of the Government. Even though the Government decided to increase the Indian members in the council to represent the view of the natives it did not serve even this purpose. The majority of the Indian nominees to the Council did not represent the Indian people or the emerging nationalist opinion.<sup>9</sup>

The Act of 1876 empowered local governments to introduce the elective system in the constitution of a municipality if a majority of the rate payers of that municipality demanded it. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 introduced representative elements in the councils, though the Government was careful to maintain official majorities. The members were given the right to discuss the budget but they could neither vote on it nor move a motion to amend it.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the strong military the colonial State depended much upon their equally strong bureaucracy. The administration of Colonial State was carried on by the colonial bureaucracy. This bureaucracy was responsible to the British people through their Parliament.<sup>11</sup> It was the

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<sup>9</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *India's Struggle For Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 113-114.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115

<sup>11</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *op. cit.*, p.36

British who created a 'Weberian bureaucracy' in India.<sup>12</sup> At the apex of the hierarchy of the colonial polity was the viceroy. Below him were the members of a bureaucratic corporation, resting upon the principles of meritocracy, who were based in territorial units, called districts and sub-districts.<sup>13</sup> A pre-colonial bureaucracy of indigenous origin was located at the lower most rung of the administrative apparatus. Rather than by virtue of merit and skills which inform a modern bureaucracy, the selection of the members of these strata was based on their connection and local influence.<sup>14</sup>

The British never employed the western liberalism in its full sense nor did they depend completely on the authoritarian policy while administering India. The colonial policy of the British followed "a tortuous middle course between the farsighted 'liberal experiment' and the unimaginative 'conservative adventure'".<sup>15</sup>

However this was not a constant, unchanging policy. The colonial government changed its policies according to the changing context. This explains the marked difference in the policies of the colonial rule after the

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<sup>12</sup> Ravinder Kumar 'State Formation in India: Retrospect and Prospect' in Martin Doornbos & Sudipta Kaviraj, (ed.), *op. cit.* p.402.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 402

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 402-403.

<sup>15</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *op. cit.*, p. 31

revolt of 1857 and also after the emergence of the organized anti-imperialist movement. The policy was then to find out ways to spoil the unity among the colonial people. The Government authorities tried to break the emerging national unity in the colony and started promoting segmentation of colonial society into all kinds of social groups, including social classes and set them against each other.<sup>16</sup> They also put forward the theory that unity is possible only under the colonial state.<sup>17</sup> This was designed to make the colonial rule a permanent one.

Late in the Eighteenth and throughout the Nineteenth century, in Britain and in India, an Orientalist image of India evolved. Orientalism categorized India as passive, otherworldly, tradition-ridden or superstitious, caste-dominated, morally degraded, unfree and despotic, and therefore weak, backward, and unchanging. It justified British rule in India.<sup>18</sup>

Christian Missionaries like Alexander Duff, historians like James Mill, Educationists and administrators like Macaulay, writers like Charles Grant etc. contributed to the creation of an Oriental stereotype through their writings and policy approaches. Partha Chatterjee rightly remarks

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<sup>16</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Essays ...*, p. 71

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71

<sup>18</sup> Richard G. Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 92

that “Orientalism *created* the Oriental, it was a body of knowledge in which the Oriental was ‘*contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks’ and Western power over the Orient was given the ‘status of scientific truth.’ Thus, Orientalism was a ‘kind of western projection on to and will to govern over the Orient’.<sup>19</sup>

The western educated Indians assimilated the Oriental stereotype created by colonial masters. Social reformers and early Indian nationalists could not come out of this stereotype completely. The Britishers became successful in creating Orientalist hegemony.

### **Concept of power:**

In a general sense power means the capacity to dominate and control. Power is very rarely limited to the pure exercise of brute force. Johan Galtung identifies three ways in which power can work. Normative power, based on persuasion requires an element of submissiveness. Remunerative power, based on bargaining requires some kind of dependency. And punitive power, based on force requires an element of fear.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World – A Derivative Discourse*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p. 36

<sup>20</sup> Robert J. Burrowes, *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense – A Gandhian Approach*,

The consent theory of power identifies people as the ultimate source of all power and highlights the notion that elites are dependent on the cooperation of the people they dominate.<sup>21</sup> The three major criticisms of the consent theory are:<sup>22</sup>

- (1) Though elites are always dependent, they are not necessarily dependent on the cooperation of the people they actually oppress or exploit.
- (2) The consent theory of power fails to adequately consider the cultural dimension.
- (3) It pays inadequate attention to social structures.

As the consent theory of power provides incomplete and inadequate explanation of power the consent theory of power should be complemented by insights derived from the structural theory.<sup>23</sup>

According to the structural theory, social structures and systems are regarded as by products of certain types of social interactions that have become so regular and entrenched that they have acquired a life of their own. First, it highlights the fact that while individual choices exist in

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State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996, p. 83.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-91

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90 - 91

theory, in practice tradition, social process and social structures limit the capacity for individual decision making. This is because while there might be no overt conflict and no obvious parties, it is structures and systems rather than individual choices that determine social outcome.<sup>24</sup>

According to structuralists “a structure such as patriarchy or capitalism is a system of power in itself. And these structures are sustained by at least three factors: the support of the national elites, the acceptance of elite hegemony by most of society, and the support of other structures including the coercive power of the state.”<sup>25</sup>

Gramsci made a genuinely original contribution in his treatment of the relationship between 'structure' and 'superstructure'. Gramsci was a Marxist in seeing the mode of production (the 'structure') as the ultimately determining force in society. But more consistently than any other Marxist thinker, Gramsci shifted the focus of Marxist practice into the realm of the 'superstructure'. The superstructure is the world of ideologies, culture, religion and politics.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93

<sup>26</sup> Lloyd Spencer, 'Antonio Gramsci, 1891-1937', in <http://www.tasc.ac.uk/depart/media/staff/Is/Modules/Theory/Gramsci.htm>

According to Gramsci there are two major super structural “levels”:  
 “the one that can be called “civil society”, that is the ensemble of  
 organism commonly called “private”, and that of “political society” or  
 “the state”.<sup>27</sup> These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function  
 of “hegemony” which the dominant group exercises throughout society  
 and on the other hand to that of “direct domination” or command  
 exercised through the state and “juridical” government”.<sup>28</sup>

The dominant group, because of its position and function in the  
 world of production, enjoys the spontaneous consent of the great masses  
 of the population. The state exercises its coercive power which “legally”  
 enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent” either actively  
 or passively.<sup>29</sup> Thus Gramsci defined the state as a mixture of coercion  
 and hegemony. A ruling class enjoys hegemony if it is capable of  
 exercising moral and political leadership, thereby achieving the consent of  
 the masses.<sup>30</sup>

Gramsci maintains that “Hegemony pre supposes that account be  
 taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which

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<sup>27</sup> Gramsci defined state as “political society + civil society”, Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks*, Orient Longman, Chennai, 1998 (Reprint), p.208

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O’ Leary, *Theories of the State – The Politics of Liberal Democracy*, Macmillan, London, 1994, p. 221.

hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed - in other words, the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic corporate kind".<sup>31</sup>

Bipan Chandra and Bhagwan Josh sought to apply the Gramscian concept of hegemony in the Indian context. Bipan Chandra considers the nature of British State as semi –hegemonic and legal authoritarian.<sup>32</sup>

Even though the colonial state was established by force, it was based not just on force but on certain civil institutions such as elected assemblies, local government institutions, courts, schools and colleges and above all on the rule of law. Even while suppressing popular opposition; it observed certain rules of law and codes of administration.<sup>33</sup> Bipan Chandra considers the colonial state as a semi – hegemonic state on the basis that the colonial state relied very heavily for the acquiescence of the Indian people in their rule on two notions, (1) that the foreign rulers were benevolent and just, (2) that the colonial rulers were invincible.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Gramsci, *op. cit.*, p.161

<sup>32</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement – The Long Term Dynamics*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1993(First Edition 1988), p.18

<sup>33</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 506

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 506

Bhagwan Josh considers the colonial state as a hegemonic state –in-formation. This was a continuous process: “from the end of the nineteenth century onwards this state had begun to seek its legitimacy partly from this qualitatively new type of consent while still combining within it old forms of loyalty and obedience.”<sup>35</sup>

The colonial India in the nineteenth century enjoyed limited civil liberties such as the freedom of press and opinion. A large number of newspapers constituted a formidable opposition to the colonial state. And the people could hold mass meetings to express grievances and criticize the policy of the government.<sup>36</sup>

The working class in India enjoyed some elementary trade union rights. Under the India Trade Union Act of 1926 the colonial authority recognized the right of the working class to form a registered trade Union. By enacting Labour laws the Government tried to keep working class movements within the constitutional bounds and attempted to exercise hegemony over the working class.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. However, depending on the situation, the government sought to curtail these liberties. Prohibitory orders became common during periods of active struggle.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

“The hegemony of the colonial state manifested itself in many forms such as passive acquiescence, apathy, submissiveness, resignation and unquestioned obedience to the state apparatus”.<sup>38</sup> Mass mobilization could, however, change this. The non-cooperation movement eroded “the omnipresence of the legal and educational institutions of the British and to some extent lessened the feeling of awe towards Government and authority.”<sup>39</sup> Political leaders in their campaigns tried to lessen the feeling of awe towards Governmental authority. The police was often ridiculed.<sup>40</sup>

Ranajit Guha does not agree with the views of Bipan Chandra and Bhagwan Josh. According to Guha the metropolitan state was hegemonic in character; where as the colonial state was non-hegemonic. In metropolis the moment of persuasion outweighed that of coercion but in the colonial state that existed in India persuasion was out weighed by coercion. He considers the nature of the colonial state as autocratic. Since

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>40</sup> There are several instances of such incidents mentioned in K.N. Panikkar's, *Against the Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprising in Malabar, 1836-1921*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001. For such incidents during the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar see Moyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevita Katha* (Mal.) Kozhikkode, 1966, p.286 and *Home Political Department, F.No.18/VI, 1930*, National Archives of India.

colonial state was non hegemonic, it was not possible for the state to assimilate the civil society of the colonized to itself.<sup>41</sup>

In Guha's work, "*Hegemony stands for a condition of Dominance (D) such that, in the organic composition D, Persuasion (P) outweighs coercion (C)*"<sup>42</sup> according to him there can be no colonialism without coercion, no subjection of an entire people in its own homeland by foreigners without the explicit use of force.<sup>43</sup>

British established power initially by act of conquest. But as colonialism graduated to a more systematic, imperial career, the exclusive reliance on the sword gave way to an orderly control in which force had to learn to live with institutions and ideologies designed to generate consent. The idiom of conquest was replaced by the idiom of Order.<sup>44</sup>

In the name of Order the colonial bureaucracy which was armed with powers which could often muzzle free speech and censor the press, curbed the individual freedom of movement, and deny the right of assembly to the people. Order was thus enforced by the coercive

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<sup>41</sup> Ranjit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony – History and Power in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, p. XII.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

apparatus of the state whereas it had little to do with the state in Western Europe.<sup>45</sup>

Guha further stated that mobilization against the imperialist authority was the most visible and unquestionable evidence of the fact that the masses had transferred their allegiance from the raj to the nationalist leadership and its party - the India National Congress. The question of hegemony was at the core of the campaigns of Swadeshi movement and Non cooperation movement.<sup>46</sup> To withdraw the cooperation from the raj was to demonstrate that it did not rule by consent. Thus mobilization was another name for popular consent, for hegemony against an autocratic government which had reduced them to a second-class citizen in their own land.<sup>47</sup>

*Hind Swaraj* written by Gandhi in 1909 reflects his understanding of the British domination of India. In the seventh chapter titled 'Why was India Lost? He explains the reasons for the sub-ordination of Indians to a colonial power. He wrote "The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them. Let us now see whether these propositions can be

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<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102

sustained. They came to our country originally for purposes of trade..... In order to become rich all at once we welcomed the Company's officers with open arms. We assisted them."<sup>48</sup> He further elaborated the point thus:

“when our Princes fought among themselves, they sought the assistance of Company Bahadur. That corporation was versed alike in commerce and war. It was unhampered by questions of morality. Its object was to increase its commerce and to make money. It accepted our assistance, and increased the number of its warehouses. To protect the latter it employed an army which was utilized by us also. Is it not then useless to blame the English for what we did at that time? The Hindus and the Mahomedans were at daggers drawn. This, too, gave the Company its opportunity and thus we created the circumstances that gave the Company its control over India. Hence it is truer to say that we gave India to the English than that India was lost.”<sup>49</sup>

Gandhi's understanding of the nature of British imperialism and economic exploitation of the colony were clearly expressed in Hind

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<sup>48</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 2000, (13<sup>th</sup> Reprint), p. 34

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35

Swaraj. In his own words: “Napoleon is said to have described the English as a nation of shop-keepers. It is a fitting description. They hold whatever dominions they have for the sake of their commerce. Their army and their navy are intended to protect it.....It is related that someone asked the late President Kruger whether there was gold in the moon. He replied that it was highly unlikely because, if there were, the English would have annexed it. Many problems can be solved by remembering that money is their God.....it is proved that the English entered India for the purposes of trade. They remain in it for the same purpose and.....They wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods. That they cannot do so is true, but the blame will not be theirs. They will leave no stone unturned to reach the goal.”<sup>50</sup>

The context in which Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* was explained by Anthony J. Parel and Richard Fox. In the introduction to *Hind Swaraj* he traces the intellectual, historical, political, social and geographical background of the book. After the industrial revolution the world was divided into the industrialized and non-industrialized, or the ‘civilized’ and the ‘non-civilized’, parts.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36

<sup>51</sup> Anthony J. Parel, (ed.), *Gandhi Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997 p. xix

Gandhi, while he was in London, read G.K. Chesterton's diatribe in the *Illustrated London News* dated 18th September, 1909. According to Chesterton Indian nationalists were "a small and deculturated group that existed in a false, shadowed world – shadowed because they had been some what enlightened by British education and civilization, yet they were still partly darkened by India's obscure Oriental traditions"<sup>52</sup> Chesterton argued, how could the nationalism of Indians be authentic when "all they wished for was their own English style parliament, their English-style elections, and their own English – style liberties."<sup>53</sup>

So it was the duty of the British to reform the deculturated. Thus James Fitzjames Stephen, a law member of the Viceroy's council, argued that English had a civilizing mission. This was because 'English in India are the representative of a belligerent civilization' and the introduction of such a civilization into India was 'the great and characteristic task' of Britain in India.<sup>54</sup>

It was against the backdrop of such arguments of Chesterton and Stephen's that Gandhi developed his critique of modern civilization.

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<sup>52</sup> Richard G. Fox, *op. cit.*, p.84, *CWMG*, Vol.10, p. 107

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84

<sup>54</sup> Anthony J. Parel, *op. cit.*, p. xx

Gandhi, in his *Hind Swaraj*, condemned Indian imitations of the West. He on the one hand “broadened the condemnation into a fervid rejection of modern civilization” and on the other “used it as an acclamation of traditional India – and thereby as an apology for contemporary India’s “backwardness”.<sup>55</sup> But Gandhi’s attack was limited to certain unhealthy tendencies in modern western civilization.<sup>56</sup> He welcomed a number of its contributions – civil liberty, equality rights, prospects for improving the economic conditions of life, liberation of women from tradition and religious toleration.<sup>57</sup> His condemnation of modern civilization was a fundamental critique of the entire edifice of bourgeois society.”<sup>58</sup> The critique of the western civilization was a total moral critique of the fundamental aspects of civil society.<sup>59</sup>

Gandhi thoroughly criticized all the aspects of modernity. He criticized the democratic institutions and the modern state apparatus. Partha Chatterjee argues that the ideal conception of *Ramarajya* encapsulates the critique of all that is morally reprehensible in the economic and political organization of civil society.<sup>60</sup> Gandhi wanted to

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<sup>55</sup> Richard G. Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 85

<sup>56</sup> Anthony J. Parel, *op. cit.*, p. xlvii

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii

<sup>58</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist ...*, p. 90

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92

confront an activist state as well as other locations of power in civil society. His concerns about civil society often parallel the republican reading of civil society. “While recognizing that state can become a major obstacle to liberty, strong republicans appreciate that the institutions of civil society can also deny liberty to citizens. For this reason, strong republicans, unlike most liberals, pay considerable attention to the power that resides in civil society.”<sup>61</sup>

Colonial policy depended on the nature of politics and economy in the Metropolis as well as the emerging trends in the colony. Its interest was to prolong its rule as a long as possible for which the colonial masters changed their policy from time to time depending on the nature of exploitation.

Colonial state in India cannot be considered as autocratic or authoritative in nature nor as hegemonic in character. The western models that British introduced in India included the mechanisms of civil society. The public meetings, press campaigns against the government, interview with the government officials etc. were allowed in colonial India. The existence of the Indian National Congress, which organized mass mobilizations against government on such a wide scale shows that the

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<sup>61</sup> Ronal J. Terchek, *Gandhi Struggling for Autonomy*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p. 119

British state was not purely autocratic or authoritative state. The rule of law which the British government established in India was in a limited sense when compared to that of a modern state. The colonial ideology behind the introduction of rule of law and education was not basically for the improvement or modernization of Indian society. Instead it was through which they tried to get support of a section of the people to their rule.

In the following section we argue that Gandhi's political programme was designed to erode British notions of legitimacy and undermine the consent Indians had given to the British government.

#### **SECTION B: GANDHI'S EMERGENCE AS A NATIONAL LEADER**

The post World War-I period witnessed the growth of national movement into a widespread mass movement. Many factors contributed to this development. One of them was the advent of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who became the undisputed leader of the national movement by 1920 and remained so until independence was won in 1947.

It was in 1915 that Gandhi came back to India from South Africa. Born on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869 at Porbandar in Gujarat, Gandhi, after getting legal education from Britain, had gone to South Africa to practice law.

But there he was agitated by the gross injustice, racial discrimination and degradation that the emigrant Indians had to suffer under the European colonial rulers. Gandhi soon became the leader of a long struggle against these conditions. During 1894-1914 Gandhi was engaged in a heroic struggle against the 'racist' authorities of South Africa.

### **Ideas of Satyagraha:**

It was during his struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa that Gandhi evolved in the noted agitational method of 'passive resistance', soon refined as 'Satyagraha' (firmness in a truthful cause).<sup>62</sup> Gandhi's introduction to western thought began in 1888 with his legal studies in London.<sup>63</sup> His life in England helped him in evolving his methods. There he came into contact with the works of the eminent thinkers of the west, (the works of Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin). Even though these scholars had influenced Gandhi's mind it was his childhood experiences and Hindu tradition which gave him a foundation to develop it as a political philosophy. According to A.L. Basham the fundamental concept of Gandhi's philosophy owes nothing to western sources. It was

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<sup>62</sup> Passive Revolution was seen as a weapon of the weak and characterized by hatred and so Gandhi asked the readers of his *Indian Opinion* to suggest a single word. The best entry was Sadagraha which Gandhi altered to Satyagraha. B.R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, Delhi, 1958, p. 95, and *CWMG*, Vol.16, p. 10

<sup>63</sup> Anthony Parel, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiii

developed from the Hindu tradition in which he was brought up.<sup>64</sup> Gandhi's non-violence is an exclusion of the classical Hindu principle of *ahimsa* which is also an important principle of both Jainism and Buddhism.<sup>65</sup> Even though 'passive resistance' owe much to western influence upon him, his Satyagraha 'was in no way un-Indian.'<sup>66</sup> But it is not good to undermine the influences of western ideas on him. It was the contact with the west which enabled him to enter into political field. "it is possible that if he never read the Gospels, Tolstoy, Ruskin, and much western literature, Gandhi would not have entered politics at all, or, if he had done so, would have devised techniques and policies different from those which he actually did devise."<sup>67</sup>

Gandhi's Satyagraha was based on truth and non-violence and for that reason an ideal Satyagrahi was to be truthful and peaceful. But at the same time he would not submit to what he considered wrong. He would accept sufferings willingly in the course of struggle against the wrongdoer. But even while resisting evil, he would not hate the evildoer. To Gandhi non-violence was not a weapon of the weak and the coward.

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<sup>64</sup> A.L. Basham, 'Traditional Influences on Gandhi' in R. Kumar, edited, *Essays on Gandhian Politics – The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, p. 25

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42

Only the strong and the brave could practice it. He would be utterly fearless. Even violence was preferable to cowardice.

Gandhi would not separate thought from practice, belief from action. His truth and non-violence were meant for daily living and not merely for high-sounding speeches and writings. Gandhi's non-violence and Satyagraha demonstrated considerable originality. It was Gandhi's conviction that suffering can be used creatively for the emancipation of the people. Even if Satyagrahi was betrayed by the adversary, the former had to continue to repose his trust in the latter as the object was not to destroy but to win over the enemy.

Gandhi's Satyagraha was both a political technique to be used against British Colonialism and a moral philosophy that claimed his utopian vision.<sup>68</sup> His philosophy of Satyagraha advocated "a ceaseless activism by the aggrieved individuals who *in foro conscientiae* were convinced about the fact that those manning the authoritative positions in the political system violated certain fundamental principles of just governance and acted in an unrighteous manner when they perpetuated exploitation and injustice."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Richard G. Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 7

<sup>69</sup> Naresh Dadhich and B. Arun Kumar, 'Gandhian Protest: A Conceptual Analysis',

## **Gandhi and his idea of Non-violent struggle:**

The central question of Gandhian strategy was how to organize mass action against the colonial government. The basic assumptions on which Gandhian strategy depended were that individuals are the ultimate source of power, no government can rule without the consent of the ruled and modern state intruded into basics which were once considered private. Gandhi's struggle against the British was a fight against power. According to Burrowes Gandhi's struggle in India was based on his understanding that "“Illegitimate power can work only in certain circumstances. Normative power (appeals to values or ideas) works because people are “empty”, remunerative power (incentives and rewards) works because people are dependent, and punitive power (the threat or use of force) works because people are afraid.”<sup>70</sup>

For its effectiveness state depends on the ability to elicit other forms of power to support its own. Gandhian strategy was designed to erode the legitimacy of British rule in India by the deepening of the political consciousness and the widening of the mass base of the national movement. When individuals recognize their power and use it

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*Gandhi Marg*, Vol.17, No.1, April-June, 1995, p. 46

<sup>70</sup> Robert J. Burrowes, *op. cit.*, p. 117

constructively to engage in non-violent resistance against an evil state, the power of state would be reduced. The way to undermine the power of state is to organize corporate resistance “*by those constituencies on which it actually depends.*”<sup>71</sup> It is our contention that Gandhi developed a political programme in which we can see the basic elements of the consent theory and structural theory of power. He employed these two theories of power to formulate a non-violent strategy against the colonial state.

The Non Cooperation Movement of 1920 was aimed at withdrawing the consent which a government obtained from its subjects. Non – cooperation movement involves the deliberate withdrawal of cooperation with the state by organizing strikes, boycotts, no-tax campaigns, boycott of British courts, legislative bodies and elections. Political non – cooperation includes acts of civil disobedience – the deliberate, open, and peaceful violation of particular laws, regulations, or instructions that are believed to be morally objectionable or unreasonable.<sup>72</sup> Non cooperation with the government results in the loss of prestige of the government. Thus the government lost its prestige during the non-violent non-cooperation of 1920, which it never regained.

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98

“Titles, law-courts, educational institutions no longer inspire the awe they did in 1920.”<sup>73</sup>

Gandhi offered nonviolence as the means to make non cooperation effective against the British rule in India. He chose non-violence not only for ethical reasons but also for its practical utility. In a letter to Viceroy Baron Chelmsford he wrote “In European countries condonation of such grievous wrongs as the Khilafat and the Panjab would have resulted in a bloody revolution by the people.....But half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance and the other half is unwilling to do so”.<sup>74</sup> Only a non-violent movement could get the support of the masses. Large scale mass participation on the lines of non violence alone can make non cooperation successful. Indian National Congress’ acceptance of his non-violent technique was not a moral or religious act but a political decision because Gandhi offered a course of action which was seen to be practical and effective.

Governments find it difficult to take action against the non violent movements. “Repression against non-violent resisters can alienate various groups further so that it actually weakens the opponents and strengthens

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<sup>73</sup> Gandhi, *CWVG*, Vol.40, p. 349

<sup>74</sup> *Home Political Collection Deposit*, No.38, National Archives of India, (Hereafter NAI)

the nonviolent struggle group.”<sup>75</sup> The government at first decided not to take any action against Gandhi while the non-cooperation movement of 1920 was going on. George Lowndes, a British Officer, wrote on 5/8/1920 that “To take any legal steps against him (Gandhi) now would be merely playing into his hands. If we leave him alone the non-co-operation movement and with it his personal influence will die of inanition. I should however rather like to get our reasons into the public press and to make it known that we no longer regard him as worth powder and shot. It might be put rather neatly, I think, the Government now refuse to “co-operate” with the Mahatma!”<sup>76</sup> Later during the Salt March of 1930 also the government decided not to take any action against the march so long as it was conducted peacefully. “So long as it is conducted peacefully there is no provision of law which permits prohibition of the March.”<sup>77</sup> But the government was forced to change its policy and resort to repression once it found that its authority was getting eroded.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Gene Sharp and Bruce Jenkins, ‘The Power Potential of Nonviolent Struggle’, *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, July – December, 1996, p. 22

<sup>76</sup> *Home Department*, Collection Deposit No. 38, NAI

<sup>77</sup> Telegram dated 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1930 from Bombay Special, Bombay to Home Department, New Delhi. *Home Political*, 1930, F. No. 213, NAI

<sup>78</sup> For a local manifestation of this, see K. Gopalankutty, ‘*The National Movement in Malabar, 1930-47*’, unpublished Ph. D thesis submitted to Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1985., Chapter III, Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-34

Gandhi prepared a comprehensive plan of action before starting a movement. He chose particular and inclusive issues.<sup>79</sup> Gandhi chose immediate issues to start a movement. Except Quit India movement, which was a fight to the finish, no other movement had its declared aim as complete independence or Swaraj. He chose “petty and collateral issue of Rowlatt Bills for the inauguration of Satyagraha, although there was before India the mammoth issue of Self-Government.....in 1920 when the Punjab tragedy and the Khilaphat wrong were made by him the issue on which to inaugurate the Non-co-operation movement, - not Swaraj.”<sup>80</sup>

A movement too long prolonged will be demoralizing for the participants because of loss of rest, fatigue, suffering etc. Indian National Movement was a prolonged movement. Gandhi launched movements only when he was convinced that masses would enthusiastically participate in it. Knowing the limitations of the masses he called off the movements when ever it was at its low ebb. He kept the masses active through his constructive programme. His constructive programme, which was intended to restructure the social and economic life of all Indians, was a vital part of his strategy. It was designed to satisfy the needs of each

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<sup>79</sup> The issue of salt manufacture is a good example.

<sup>80</sup> Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I, 1885-1935*, S. Chand and Company, New Delhi, 1969, pp. 161-162

individual member of society and was centrally concerned with the needs of self esteem, security and justice. It was an attempt to strengthen Indian society socially and economically without depending on British power. "The constant internal strengthening of Indian society and its institutions was seen by Gandhi as leading to the inevitable end of British rule."<sup>81</sup> His constructive programme also enabled the participation of women especially middle class women in the national movement.

Gandhi's fasts could also be considered as a part of his strategy. Colonial government was of the opinion that Gandhi's fasts were for political ends and in order to gain prestige.<sup>82</sup> With the exception of his first fast during the Ahmedabad Mill Strike in 1918, his each fast coincided with serious internal crisis in Congress, usually over dissensions regarding policy of violence or non-violence, when Gandhi's leadership was seriously threatened; it resulted in immense increase in popularity and prestige of Gandhi at time when this was most needed by him; enabled him to re-establish his personal ascendancy.

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<sup>81</sup> Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist: With Essays on Ethics and Politics*, Porter Sargent Publishers, Boston, 1979, p. 181

<sup>82</sup> Telegram dated 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1942, from Governor General (Home Department) New Delhi to Secretary of State for India, London, *Home Political(I)1942 F.No.19/2*, NAI

Gramsci equated Gandhian method of struggle to that of war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement, and at other underground warfare.<sup>83</sup> But Gandhi's movement cannot be considered as equal to war of movement because he never advocated a frontal attack on the state; and also to that of underground warfare. Gramsci who was in prison at that time could not fully understand the nature of the movements that Gandhi organized in India. While applying Gramscian concepts one has to be selective: Gramsci was dealing with a fascist state.

Gandhi developed the agitational method of Satyagraha in South Africa and experimented with the elements of Satyagraha in his initial Indian campaigns from 1916 to 1919. Through his experiments he tried to conform it to the Indian situation. Indian national movement witnessed a practical strategy in his Satyagraha.

We shall now take each of these movements for a brief discussion.

### **Early Political Activities: Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kaira Satyagrahas**

It was with valuable experience of struggle that Gandhi came back to India keen to serve his country. Gandhi's entry into Indian politics

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<sup>83</sup> Gramsci, *op. cit.*, p. 229

occurred in 1917 and 1918 when he became involved in three local disputes: With peasants against landlords in Champaran (Bihar), farmers against revenue officials in Kaira (Gujarat), and mill-workers against their employers in Ahmedabad (Gujarat). Such disputes would have been considered outside the normal range of political activity, in areas notorious for their backwardness in the politics of nationalism; but Gandhi chose to deploy his technique of Satyagraha in each case, and by so doing made his debut as an influential actor on the Indian political stage.

### **Champaran Satyagraha:**

In 1916 he found a Satyagraha Ashram on the banks of Sabarmati River near Ahmedabad where his followers were to learn and practice ideals of truth and non-violence. Gandhi's first great experiment in Satyagraha came in 1917 in Champaran, a district of Bihar. Champaran was in fact Gandhi's least anticipated Satyagraha. In 1915 he had not expected to use this weapon for at least five years, and even early in 1917 he knew nothing about Champaran, not even its name or geographical position, let alone the economics of Indigo planting.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power – Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972, p. 52

The European planters had cruelly oppressed the peasants on the indigo plantations in Champaran. Gandhi toured the area and made enquiries into the conditions of the peasants defying the official orders against his entry there. Ultimately the Government was forced to reduce the disabilities of the peasants. Even though Gandhi considered the success was limited he succeeded in making the government to appoint an enquiry committee to deal with peasant distress. In Gandhi's political career Champaran Satyagraha was of immense significance. "Before 1917 his reaction to Indian problems had been largely theoretical, and it was these Bihar *raiya*s who brought him to grips with India's people and government. By championing them Gandhi began to clothe with flesh and blood the figure which had hitherto been only a shadowy contender in the arena of Indian Public Life.<sup>85</sup> Even after entering into the political he did not try to link their struggle with conventional politics and not align with any political group. Unlike his political activities in South Africa Gandhi restricted the uses of press as well as his sources of finance.<sup>86</sup> Even though Gandhi had not in 1917 moved entirely beyond the confines of regional loyalties, Champaran did give him an all India public

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75

reputation.<sup>87</sup> It was here for the first time in India he practiced Civil disobedience of the law. His explanatory statement in the magistrate's court caused some sensation in the country.<sup>88</sup>

### **Kaira Satyagraha:**

The scene of Gandhi's second Indian Satyagraha was the Gujarat district of Kaira. The Kaira campaign was chiefly directed against the

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79

<sup>88</sup> P. Spratt, *Gandhism: An Analysis*, Huxley Press, Madras, 1939, p. 206. Gandhi who appeared before the District Magistrate read the statement: "With the permission of the Court, I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. In my humble opinion, it is a question of difference of opinion between the local administration and my self. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation' to come and help the ryots, who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the administration and the planters. I have no other motive and I cannot believe that my coming here can in any way disturb the public peace or cause of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The administration, however, have thought differently. I fully appreciate their difficulty, and I admit too, that they can only proceed upon information they receive. As a law abiding citizen, my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I could not, therefore, voluntarily retire. Amid this conflict of duty, I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the administration.

I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding in the public life of India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting examples. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience. I have ventured to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience of the higher law of our being-the voice of conscience. *The Leader*, 22-4-1917, *CWVG*, Vol.15, pp. 345-346

Government. In the spring of 1918 crop failures and drought brought misery to the peasants of Kaira in Gujarat. Gandhi led a peasant struggle against the collection of land revenue when the crops had failed.

Home Rule League was very active in Gujarat. Gandhi relied upon the foundation made by the Home Rule League to start his activities there. He worked among the poor illiterate peasants and brought politics to people who were not experienced it before. His appeal was not that of the Presidency Politician, just as his aims differed from theirs: the politics he preached were moulded to suit the real interests of the people in the streets and villages, as his Satyagrahas of 1918 showed.<sup>89</sup> It was during this movement that peasants came to understand that “it was their right to question Government’s authority to tax them, that the officials were not their masters but their servants, that therefore they should shed all fear of officials and stand erect in defiance of coercion, intimidation and worse.”<sup>90</sup> It was here that the mass Satyagraha was used for the first time in India. It gave the idea that “Satyagraha cannot be practiced successfully by people without training and some familiarity with its principles.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 93

<sup>90</sup> Pattabhi Sittaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 141

<sup>91</sup> P. Spratt, *op. cit.*, p. 207

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The work he had done in Gujarat during Kaira Satyagraha helped him a lot in later years.<sup>92</sup> He had, however, clearly secured an established position of local leadership by the time of the Kaira Satyagraha. Although Satyagraha failed in Kaira, in that it did not procure the objects for which it had been initiated, it showed its true colours as a very powerful weapon because it was so simple and versatile. Kaira hammered home the lesson of Champaran that Satyagraha could be used in virtually any situation of conflict, by literate and illiterate persons. It was a weapon for all seasons, and in Gandhi's hands, directed by his personal ideology; it gave him the edge over conventional politicians with their techniques of petitions, public speeches and debates, which were more suitable for the educated and not designed to bring in the masses.

#### Ahmedabad Mill Strike:

Satyagraha in Gujarat in 1918 was not continued to Kaira. Gandhi organized a similar campaign in Ahmedabad, which received less publicity because it was directed against Indian Employers, not

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<sup>92</sup> In 1918 Gandhi was sowing the seeds: he was to reap the harvest of this new pattern of leadership later when Gujarat entered Indian Politics as an area both solidly loyal to him and differing in composition and interests from the regions which had thrown up the early political elites. Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 108

government officials. In contrast to Kaira and Champaran, Ahmedabad was an urban center.

In 1918 workers strike started demanding the increase in wages. Gandhiji requested the mill owners to refer the wage dispute to arbitration. When they refused to do so, Gandhi resorted to a fast to pressurize the owners. He managed to settle the matter after 21 days of strike. The employers agreed to increase 35% in the wages of employees.<sup>93</sup>

Even though this Satyagraha did not involve conflict with the government, it was a highly significant one in Gandhi's Political development. In the realm of political technique this was Gandhi's first fast intended to influence public events, and was the forerunner of his hunger – strike in all-India politics.

With these three movements Gandhi entered Indian Politics without the support of any particular political party or faction within a party. He did not represent any region, any religious group or caste. He was, like in South Africa, above such affiliations. Both Champaran & Kaira were rural areas and for that reason politically inactive. He worked among them and

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<sup>93</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.16, pp. 348-349

gave the rural people a new political weapon, i.e., Satyagraha. These Satyagrahas elevated Gandhi as a leader who could represent the ideas of the poor in the society. By mid- 1918 Gandhi was walking on the verges of institutional politics, still isolated from the politicians, though widely known as a powerful and original leader of people

### **Gandhi's Emergence As A Revolutionary Politician:**

It was the Rowlatt Act which brought Gandhi into active political movement of all India dimension. During the First World War Gandhi had shown intense loyalty towards the British and even urged Indian to join the British Army. This earned him the epithet "recruiting sergeant of the Government."<sup>94</sup> But the post war events greatly disillusioned Gandhi. "The First World War transformed Gandhi into a political leader in his native land. If India had not felt the repercussions of the European conflict it is possible that Gandhi would have remained a public worker in the small world of the district and the market town, only occasionally

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<sup>94</sup> Gandhi's eagerness to secure Swaraj through recruitment may be seen from the fact that he even amended the doctrine of non-violence temporarily to meet the situation. Somewhat disillusioned by the Kheda Satyagraha, in which it had been brought home to him that people only adopted Satyagraha because they were too cowardly to resort to violence, he now laid that greatest stress on courage and manliness....He reconciled his new attitude with the concept of non-violence by convincing himself that India must first regain courage and commit violence in order to appreciate the beauty of non-violence. This attitude, however, lasted only as long as the recruitment campaign. P.H.M. Van Den Dungen, 'Gandhi in 1919: Loyalist or Rebel?', in R. Kumar edited., *op. cit.*, p. 43

participating in the activities of the political nation. But the war was a watershed in Gandhi's own career and in Indian politics."<sup>95</sup>

The announced Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were not in tune with the aspirations of the country. The reforms had not contemplated the principle of 'self-determination' which the Allied Power had promised to the subjugated peoples after the war. While the government tried to appease the people, it was equally determined to suppress the nationalists who would reject the official reforms. Accordingly in February 1919 the Government of India passed the Rowlatt Act<sup>96</sup> which empowered the Government to arrest and imprison any person without judicial trial and conviction.

The Rowlatt Act was a shock to Indians. The people who were expecting more democratic measures from the Government now felt humiliated. A powerful agitation arose against the Rowlatt Act under the leadership of Gandhi. He decided to meet the situation with a campaign of Satyagraha. For this purpose Gandhi had toured the country extensively

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<sup>95</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 123

<sup>96</sup> The Rowlatt Act was designed to equip the Government of India with the authority to deal with the outbreaks of revolutionary crime which characterized the opening decades of the twentieth century and which were initiated by terrorist groups in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab in a bid to undermine the fabric of political society in India. R. Kumar in his introduction, *op. cit.*, p. 1

and was received with great respect every where.<sup>97</sup> The Rowlatt Satyagraha was the first nation-wide mass movement led by Gandhi. “The launching of Rowlatt Satyagraha was an act of faith rather than an act of calculation, for although Gandhi had a firm belief in the righteousness of his cause, he had no idea how the people of India would respond to his initiative”.<sup>98</sup> When he issued a call for a *hartal* (closing of shops) on the 6<sup>th</sup> he was not occupying any prominent place in India politics and did not enjoy the support of any political Organization or any powerful social interest. This Satyagraha was the first country wide agitation to be launched against the British government, and it not only transformed the masses, but it also paved the way for Gandhi’s emergence as a dominant figure in Indian Politics.<sup>99</sup> It was during this Satyagraha that “his ability to command the allegiance of the masses was well demonstrated, and he showed both how effective Satyagraha might be as a mean of attacking the Government, and how safe order and peace were in his hands.”<sup>100</sup>

Gandhi’s loyalty to the British government came to an end with the Rowlatt Satyagraha. Usually historians considered Rowlatt Act as something which inspired Gandhi almost overnight to adopt an ant-British

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<sup>97</sup> Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p.160

<sup>98</sup> R. Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 3

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>100</sup> P. Spratt, *op. cit.*, p. 244

stance. According to Van Den Dugan Gandhi's alienation from the British Raj started as early as 1905.<sup>101</sup> The altered climate of politics after the Great War, and the enactment of the Rowlett Act in 1919, combined to create a situation which encouraged Gandhi to transform his ideas into political action. "It was the war mentality of the Government of India which precipitated the Satyagraha of 1919. Gandhi had been ready since at least 1909."<sup>102</sup>

People enthusiastically responded to the call of Gandhi to observe a countrywide *hartal* on 6<sup>th</sup>. "The hartal was a way of popularizing Gandhi's campaign against the injustice."<sup>103</sup> The entire country was politically electrified. Earlier works on Gandhi in the regional level paid rich dividends to Gandhi during the Rowlatt Satyagraha. According to H.F. Owan Gandhi depended heavily on the Home Rule League set up by Tilak and Annie Besant; and further more Gandhi created a Satyagraha Sabha for this purpose; and he also helped to give birth to the Khilafat

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<sup>101</sup> The most decisive change in Gandhi's political outlook occurred between about mid 1905 and the end of 1909. Gandhi developed his own political technique of political action during these years. Victory to Japan in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 and the agitation against the partition of Bengal delighted Gandhi. In the closing months of 1905 and in the early months of 1906 the Bengal agitation clearly played a significant role in bringing Gandhi's nationalist aspiration in the forefront. P.H.M. Van Den Dungen, *op. cit.*, p. 51

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63

<sup>103</sup> Anima Bose, 'The Rowlatt Act and Gandhian Satyagraha', Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy, (ed) *Facets of Mahatma Gandhi – 1 Non-violence and Satyagraha*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p. 167

Committees.<sup>104</sup> Moreover D.E. Baker, K.L. Gillion, J. Masselos, D.W. Ferrell and R. Kumar say that people reacted actively because of their regional discontents.<sup>105</sup>

The country wide *hartal* resulted in the unprecedented fraternization of Hindus and Muslim and the general excitement among the masses alarmed the British. The Government tried to suppress the mass agitation by arrests, lathi-charge and firing. The chain of reactions created by the anti-Rowlett Act agitation culminated in the Amritsar Tragedy and the consequent widespread disorder in the country. All this pushed Gandhi to the political stage of India. "The response to Gandhi's call for a Satyagraha against the Rowlett Act was heartening and tragic because, although the *hartal* of 6<sup>th</sup> April was widely observed, in many cities the observance was marked by death and violence on a scale which led Gandhi to confer later on, that he had committed a 'Himalayan blunder' in assuming that the masses were sufficiently educated in the

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<sup>104</sup> H.F. Owen 'Organizing for the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919' in R. Kumar edited *op. cit.*, p. 70,77-78

<sup>105</sup> See for more details the articles of D.E.U. Baker, 'The Rowlatt Satyagraha in the Central Provinces and Berar', K.L. Gillion 'Gujarat in 1919' J. Masselos, 'Some aspects of Bombay city politics in 1919', D.W. Ferrell, 'The Rowlatt Satyagraha in Delhi', and R. Kumar, 'The Rowlatt Satyagraha in Lahore' – all of which are in R. Kumar, (ed.), *op. cit.*

principles of ahimsa to prosecute a political campaign in a peaceful and non-violent manner.”<sup>106</sup>

Owing to its failure in keeping with the principle of non-violence Gandhi had withdrawn the movement on April 18<sup>th</sup>. Withdrawal of Rowlatt Satyagraha ushered in a new chapter, namely, “that the leader must recognize where the followers are”.<sup>107</sup> Even though the Satyagraha failed in getting the Rowlatt Act repealed it was during this movement that “Gandhi was able to begin the process of transforming social groups into a cohesive, articulate political community.”<sup>108</sup>

### **Amritsar Tragedy and Khilafat Issue:**

The Punjab incident was another shock to the people. They now found the ugliness and brutality that lay behind the façade of civilization professed by the British. Feelings of resentment ran through out the country. The ‘Punjab issue’ gave tremendous impetus to the freedom struggle. Thousands of hitherto uncommitted people were now drawn into the vortex of political movement. It warranted the reappraisal of congress policies and marked the commencement of the non-co-operation

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<sup>106</sup> D.E.U. Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-95

<sup>107</sup> Anima Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 167

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170

movement. The Amritsar tragedy brought freedom a little more closer. Now Gandhi turned his attention to Punjab wrongs and Khilafat issue. Gandhi's emergence and recognition as a potential all India leader were occasioned in the intervening month by the Rowlatt Satyagraha. His claim to a new status in politics was reinforced by his decision to champion the Khilafat and Punjab 'wrongs'.<sup>109</sup>

Many Muslims in India were much sore about the Allies post war treatment of Turkey. The undermining of the position of the sultan inflamed the feelings of Indian Muslim leaders. In September 1919 they, under the leadership of Ali brothers (Maulana Muahammed Ali and Shoukath Ali), Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani formed an all India Khilafat committee and started organizing a country wide agitation against the British in India.

The Congress leaders including Tilak and Gandhi viewed the Khilafat agitation as a golden opportunity to bring the Muslims into national movement. In November 1919 Gandhi along with Motilal Nehru, and Madan Mohan Malaviya took part in an all India Khilafat Conference. There he urged the Khilafatists to turn to Non-co-operation and boycott for getting their demands accepted by the British. This meeting was

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<sup>109</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 189

moment of great importance for the Khilafat movement, For the first time Gandhi envisaged total withdrawal of co-operation from the government and for the first time he used the word ‘non-co-operation’ though on that occasion he was thinking aloud and had not worked out the implications of his suggestion.<sup>110</sup>

In early 1920 Gandhi declared that he would lead a movement of non-violent non-co-operation if the terms of the peace treaty with Turkey did not satisfy the Indian Muslims. The Treaty of Serves (May 1920) disappointed the Muslims. The Khilafat committee decided to launch a Non-co-operation movement on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1920. The Congress officially supported the Khilafat committee. The Khilafat Committee agreed upon the triple purpose of non-co-operation – the redressal of the Punjab grievances, rectification of the Khilafat wrongs and the establishment of Swaraj.

According to C. Sankaran Nair “Mr. Gandhi and his followers took it (Khilafat movement) as an anti- British movement to secure Mohammedan support to his non-co-operation movement.”<sup>111</sup> Gandhi took the issue of Khilafat to get the support of the Muslims. At the earlier

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202

<sup>111</sup> C. Sankaran Nair, *Gandhi and Anarchy*, Chettur Sankaran Nair Foundation, Ottapalam, 2000, (third edition), P. 33

stages of the Khilafat movement it did not get any active support from the Hindus. But the Punjab issue gave Gandhi an opportunity to attract the Hindus also to back the movement. Gandhi's chance of neutralizing the fears of the Hindus and swinging them into a working communal alliance thereby making non – co-operation such a success that Muslims would feel less need to resort to violence lay in championing a Hindu cause to match the Khilafat. The Punjab issue provided the missing ingredient.<sup>112</sup>

Some historians criticize the Khilafat agitation for having mixed politics with religion. As a result, religious consciousness spread to politics and in the long run forces of communalism were strengthened. With the fall of the Khilafat movement the Hindu-Muslim unity also received a set back. The Khilafat movement had represented much wider feelings of Muslims against the British. The Nationalist leadership should have raised this 'religious political consciousness' of the Muslims to the higher plane of 'secular political consciousness'. They failed in it. The leader including Gandhi paid little attention to the practical aspects of their objective and showed no awareness of the current of political thought in Turkey. Anyhow, the Khilafat and the Non-co-operation, movement made a practical advantage to the freedom struggle. It carried

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<sup>112</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 229

the anti-British and national sentiments to the remotest corners of the country. Thereby it awakened the whole of the country politically.

The Khilafat and the Non- co-operation movement marked an important stage in the National movements as well as in the political career of Mahatma Gandhi.

The Khilafat movement from early 1919 until the inauguration of non-cooperation on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1920 was the context of Gandhi's rapid emergence as an all-India political leader who was markedly different from the politicians who had previously dominated India's political world. During the Rowlatt Satyagraha Gandhi had advised specific and limited types of civil disobedience by a picked group of Satygrahis: by mid-1920 his participation in the Khilafat movement had led him to try to organize a mass movement of political protest, taking the form of withdrawal of cooperation from the government. This new departure was the complete antithesis of the limited politics of the Congress and older Muslim League leaders. It presumed the participation in politics of far greater numbers from a much wider social, religious and geographical range than before. It also undermined the basic assumption on which conventional politics rested, namely that the aims of the tiny fraction of the Indian population

who made up the political nation were most likely to be reached by judicious cooperation with the raj.<sup>113</sup>

### **Non Cooperation Movement:**

In support of the Khilafat Movement, Gandhi had launched in August 1920 a programme of non-violent non-cooperation with the Government. The reluctance of Hindu politicians to commit themselves to non-cooperation before discussion of it at the Special Congress in September made Gandhi act on his own authority. Despite an appeal to desist by Madan Mohan Malaviya, he launched his programme of non-cooperation on 1<sup>st</sup> August, explaining that for him non-cooperation was a matter of conscience which could not wait on Congress deliberations.<sup>114</sup> The Congress at its Nagpur session in December 1920 endorsed Gandhi's programme. The Congress finalized a triple aim of non – cooperation movement: the redress of the Punjab grievances, the rectification of the Khilafat wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj. The movement was to proceed in different stages beginning with the renunciation of titles to be followed by the boycott of legislatures, law courts and educational institutions, and the campaign of non-payment of taxes.

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251

There was a widespread response to Gandhi's call for non-cooperation with the Government. The year 1921 witnessed unprecedented movement of Indian people. His call was heard from the North-West Frontier to Malabar, from Sind to Assam, with the implication that throughout India there were regional leaders who would publicize Gandhi's views and sometimes organize his campaigns in their own localities. As the tempo of the movement arose the unemployed labourers, factory workers and urban poor joined the movement. The non-cooperation movement filled the rural areas with a new enthusiasm. The Congress call for the non-payment of taxes had a tremendous impact on the exploited peasants.<sup>115</sup>

The unprecedented awakening in the whole of India caused much anxiety to the government which resorted to the repression of the people. The Congress and Khilafat volunteers were declared illegal. By the end of 1921 all top leaders – the Ali brothers, Moulana Azad, Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajput Rai, C.R. Das and Jawaharlal Nehru except Gandhi were arrested.

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<sup>115</sup> N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Saraswathi, 'Agrarian Revolts', in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *Peasant Struggles in India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1979, p. 56

The annual session of the Congress met at Ahmedabad in December 1921 and affirmed its determination to continue the programme of non-cooperation with greater vigor. Further it authorized individual or mass civil disobedience wherever possible on non-violent lines. Gandhi was to be the sole 'dictator' of the movement. Gandhi decided to launch a mass disobedience movement through a no-tax campaign in Bardoli district of Gujarat. However, the Chauri Chaura incident put an end to the whole programme. Gandhi took a very serious view of the incident. He was 'convinced' that the people were not yet ready to call off the entire Non-Cooperation movement. The Congress working committee was hastily summoned at Bardoli. The Committee which met on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1922 decided the suspension of all non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement.<sup>116</sup>

The sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement virtually stunned the country. It split the congress sharply, leading to the formation of the Swaraj Party by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru who entered the legislatures boycotted earlier. The last scene of the drama was the arrest of Gandhi on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1922 on the

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<sup>116</sup> *CWMMG*, Vol. 26, p. 138

charge of spreading disaffection against the Government.<sup>117</sup> After a historic trial he was sentenced to a 6 year's imprisonment. However, he was released within two years for reasons of health.

The Non-cooperation movement brought Gandhi into the limelight of all India politics. Another significant result was that it removed from the popular mind the sense of terror and ignominy associated with jail-entry. Jail – going became respectable and a badge of honour. Again the fear complex instilled by foreign rule was removed. People were no longer afraid. It also left a bad legacy of denying constituted authority. In Sankaran Nair's words "To me his Non-co-operation Campaign appears to be an egregious blunder for which we are already paying dearly."<sup>118</sup>

### **Constitutionalists' Opposition to Non-Cooperation:**

Constitutionalists criticized Gandhi for making boycott of council an important weapon of his struggle and also for not co-operating with the constituted authority. Sankaran Nair considers boycott of councils of the Non – co-operators as a blessing in disguise. "Had the Non – co – operator been member of these councils and had they acted in their present temper, they might well have wrecked the Reforms and have set

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<sup>117</sup> *CWVG*, Vol.28, p. 323

<sup>118</sup> C. Sankaran Nair, *op. cit.*, p. 1

back the clock of India's progress even more than they have done already.<sup>119</sup> Sree Kumaran Nair considers it as a tactical failure of Gandhi. According to him through the boycott of councils "Gandhi was giving a free hand to government and its minion to carry whatever measures they desired and to impose them upon the people regardless of their susceptibilities."<sup>120</sup>

But Judith Brown considers the reaction of the elite or constitutionalist politician to the Non-co-operation movement as motivated by a hunger for power. Another reason why they opposed it was that it threatened their whole life style and security. They also feared that Non-co-operation movement would precipitate violence, as in 1919.<sup>121</sup> The leaders who opposed it were C.R. Das, Malaviya, and Lajput Rai etc. Constitutionalists tried to highlight the negative side of Gandhi's technique without considering that he emerged as leader of National movement when they failed to lead a movement against Rowlatt Act. It was their failure which led to the emergence of Gandhi as a National leader. The failure of limited politics gave Gandhi his chance to attain

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54

<sup>120</sup> M. P. Sreekumaran Nair, *Values in Conflict*, Chettur Sankaran Nair Foundation, Kerala, 2000 (Reprint), p. 75

<sup>121</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 275

leadership in the politics of Indian nationalism.<sup>122</sup> The Khilafat and Punjab issues had shown up the impotence of elitist politics when the rulers stood firm. Economic change, war-time hardship and constitutional reform had increased the number of the politically aware, with the result that the political elite now found itself one group among many, surrounded by new recruits to institutional politics who might become allies but might prove to be opponents if their interests differed from those of the established politicians.

Gandhi started his political career in India with some regional issues. Rowlett Satyagraha made Gandhi a prominent figure in India Politics. Later he consolidated his position with the organization and with the Khilafat issue. His dominance in Congress was clear when despite severe opposition to his policy of non – co – operation he made the congress to accept his ideas. It was he who relieved the congress leaders when they were in a dilemma to overcome the political crisis which they faced with the enactment of Rowlatt Act. He gave them a new type of technique to wage a struggle against the Act which gave Gandhi a stand in the political field. Moreover Tilak one of the prominent leaders of the Congress died in 1920. Gandhi became a political heir to Tilak. Once he

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248

got access to the Congress he started dominating the Congress. This was based on the political programme that he introduced and not due to any factional squabbles or political manipulations. His success lay in the drawbacks of the prominent politicians of the time. They never tried to bring the masses in to the political forefront. But Gandhi heavily relied upon them. A crucial limitation of his movement was that he overestimated the capacity of the masses to remain non violent. That is an important reason that both the *hartal*, which he organized as a protest against Rowlatt Act and the non- co- operation movement ended in violence.

## Chapter-III

### **GANDHI AND MASS MOBILIZATION – PART I**

#### **PEASANTS, LABOURERS AND THE LEFT**

The issue of mass mobilization is discussed under two heads. In this chapter we discuss the mobilization of peasants and labourers. As the Leftists had their own programme for organizing the peasants and labourers, we have included a discussion their activities to see in what way they differed from Gandhi. The Revolutionaries also had their own programme of mass mobilization. But they failed in gaining a significant social base. They were also an important group who were not influenced by Gandhi nor was Gandhi influenced by them. As a discussion on Revolutionaries hampers the structure of the chapter and affect its readability we have appended the discussion of Gandhi's relation with the revolutionaries at the end of the chapter.

Mass mobilization on a wide scale was undertaken during the Gandhian phase of the movement. It was under the leadership of Gandhi that Indian National Movement became a mass movement. The main contribution of Gandhi to India and Indian masses had been through the powerful movements which he launched through the National Congress. Through nation-wide action he sought to mould the millions and he

largely succeeded in doing so. He changed them from a demoralized, timid and hopeless, mass, who were bullied and crushed by every dominant interest into a people with self-respect and self-reliance. He transformed the people who were considered as incapable of, resistance to a people who were capable of united action and sacrifice for a larger cause.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter we discuss in detail the movements through which these different groups were organized and Gandhi's programmes to involve them in political activities.

It is not assumed that mass could be mobilized only by Gandhi or that mass mobilization was Gandhi's sole contribution to the Indian National Movement.

#### **A) GANDHI AND PEASANTS:**

Indian National Congress did not lay much stress on the need for relief for the peasants up to 1919. It was only after the entry of Gandhi into Indian Politics that Indian National Congress took serious steps to widen the mass base of the movement. Till then it more or less remained to an organization for the upper and middle classes of the society. Activities of the Congress were confined to the urban centers only. Rural

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<sup>1</sup> Articles/Speeches by Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru Papers*, Part III, S. No.47, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, (Hereafter NMML).

population remained aloof from the National movement. Peasants formed a major share of Indian population. But they were ignorant about the nation wide anti-imperialist struggle organized by the Congress. Thus, even though Congress organized a nation-wide struggle it remained a struggle of a minority against the British Raj.

Even though the rural population was not much interested in the on going political movement they were not inert. They were involved in their own struggles against their immediate lords. But their struggles were confined to a particular area and over a particular issue.

The nationalist movement led by the Congress had in its early phase an elaborate agrarian programme, but could not provide an appropriate 'philosophy' for a broad-based peasant movement. The Congress agrarian programme was mostly confined to a critical analysis of the British land revenue administration in India.<sup>2</sup> Once Gandhi entered in to the scene the situation changed to a large extent. An entirely new dynamic and political revolutionary tendency has come to be imported into peasant struggles by Mahatma Gandhi since his advent on the Indian

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<sup>2</sup> Binay Bhushan Chaudhuri, 'Agrarian Movements in Bengal and Bihar. 1919-39' in A.R. Desai (ed.) *Peasant Struggles in India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1979 p.339.

politico-economic theatre in 1916.<sup>3</sup> Gandhi's entry into India political scene was through three local struggles he carried on in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad.

It was through the Champaran peasant struggle he came into contact with the Indian peasants. Actually the movement was already started before Gandhi's entrance into the scene. Even before Gandhi was requested to come to Champaran and was prevailed upon to take up the cause of the ryots against the oppression of the European planters there was an effective opposition.<sup>4</sup> It was at the Lucknow session that Raj Kumar Shukla, a peasant from Champaran (Bihar), met Gandhi and acquainted him with the woes of the peasants there, caused by the tyranny and rapacity of the white indigo planters. Shukla requested Gandhi to go to Champaran and see things for himself. He was so persistent in his request that Gandhi at last acceded to his proposal.<sup>5</sup> After reaching Champaran he undertook a detailed enquiry about the conditions of the peasantry. "Mahatma Gandhi initiated a method that was extremely novel and original, of conducting a systematic and authoritative enquiry into the real nature and degree of the sufferings of the peasants at the hands of the

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<sup>3</sup> N.G. Ranga, 'Indian Peasants' Struggles and Achievements' in *Ibid.*, p.72.

<sup>4</sup> P.C. Roy Choudhury, 'Gandhi's First Struggle in India', *The Hindustan Review*, Vol. LXXVII October, 1950 p. 250.

<sup>5</sup> J.B. Kripalani *Gandhi His Life and Thought*, Publication Division Government Of India, New Delhi, 1970, p.58

planters.<sup>6</sup> The technique he introduced here was first enquiring into the essential facts of the peasants' grievances, then formulating their demands, educating them as to the nature and magnitude of their needs and immediate demands, training them in the art of internal self-sufficiency pointing out the need for economy in case of a prolonged struggle against the authorities and steeling their mind to the rigours of jails, and other harassments of imperialism.<sup>7</sup>

In this movement he was helped and assisted by the intelligentsia. The most prominent organizers besides Mahatma Gandhi were Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Brij Kishore Prasad, Muzhar-ul-Haq and a number of other people belonging to the intelligentsia.<sup>8</sup>

Gandhi moved among the peasants 'trudging round on foot or trundling in a bullock cart, Gandhi came where ordinary people lives, and talked about their concerns in the language they understood.'<sup>9</sup>

While carrying on his work Government served him an order under section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code to leave the place. But he

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<sup>6</sup> N.G. Ranga and Swaraswathi, 'Agrarian Revolts' in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.54

<sup>7</sup> N.G. Ranga, *op. cit.*, p.72

<sup>8</sup> Sukhbir Choudhary, *Peasants' and Workers' Movement in India – 1905-1929*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p.28

<sup>9</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power-Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972, p.68

decided to disobey the order. He made it clear in his statement before the court. "As a law-abiding citizen, my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst."<sup>10</sup> The news of the order served on him and his refusal to comply with it, his appearance in the court and his unusual statement spread not only in Champaran but throughout the country. Peasants from the surrounding areas began to pour into the town in their thousands; they were no more afraid of the planters or the police. They wanted to know the outcome of the trial and to pay homage to this unique person, who would court imprisonment willingly and deliberately, so that their grievances might be redressed and their lot improved.<sup>11</sup> It aroused the public enthusiasm. Here for the first time was a man who had defied the might of the British Empire and was willing to court imprisonment, and suffer the hardships of jail life. Such a thing had never happened before in India. Whenever a national leader or a worker was charged with any political offence and arrested, he engaged lawyers to defend himself.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *CWVG* Vol.15, p.345

<sup>11</sup> J.B. Kripalani, *op. cit.*, p.63

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64

When Gandhi was about to be imprisoned he wrote a letter to the viceroy in which he suggested the appointment of a commission.<sup>13</sup> At last Government agreed to appoint an inquiry committee with Gandhi as a member. The wrongs that must be redressed before a commission accepted were (i) the abolition, not in name but in reality, of abwabs or illegal cesses exacted by the planters, (ii) the abolition of the damages in lieu of the indigo cultivations whether in a lump sum or by way of *sharahbeshi*, (iii) the abolition of *tinkathia* in every shape or form, (iv) the abolition of the custom of imposing fines on *raiyats*, (v) the abolition of force in exacting labour or other obedience to the planters' will.<sup>14</sup>

On the basis of the report published by the committee the Government passed the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1918. The main recommendations of the commission were incorporated in this Act. Prof. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Swaraswathi contends that "But just as the earlier Congress agitation led by Ramesh Chunder Dutt against temporary settlements did not embrace the exploitation of our peasants by zamindars, so also this agitation led by the Mahatma in Champaran did not lead up to any fight against the main causes for the terrible poverty and sufferings of Champaran peasants, namely the excessive rents and

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<sup>13</sup> *Champaran Satyagraha Papers*, Private Papers, NAI, New Delhi.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*,

exorbitant incidence of debts. It may be because of Mahatmaji's growing habit which later on came to be considered as one of his political virtues of concentrating upon one thing at a time.<sup>15</sup>

The success of their movement instilled a new vigour in the peasantry. It was for the first time they were initiated to such a method of struggle. They began to equate their particular struggle to a general movement against oppression. This political consciousness led them to gradually integrate their struggle with the political movement started by Mahatma Gandhi a few years later.<sup>16</sup> Even though Champaran movement failed in rescuing the peasants completely from the clutches of zamindars peasants were attracted to the national movement. Anyhow, it "...had the excellent result of awakening not only of the Bihar peasantry but also the general public of India to the tremendous revolutionary potentialities latent in the bosom of our peasants."<sup>17</sup>

Success of Gandhi lies in the fact that it was with his intervention that violence was checked to a large extent and he was able to make the peasantry political conscious and thereby initiate them to the national movement. It was because of the type of leadership he provided activated

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<sup>15</sup> N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Swaraswathi, *op. cit.*, p.55

<sup>16</sup> Sukhbir Choudhary, *op. cit.*, p.35

<sup>17</sup> N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Swaraswathi, *op. cit.*, p.55

them. Judith Brown contends that “with the exception of one local man there was nobody who appeared to aspire to more sophisticated ways of expressing peasant grievances nor was there any Bihar politician who thought it worth while to investigate the Champaran situation at all deeply. What actually occurred was the result of Gandhi’s intervention, with his very personal range of interests and type of leadership.”<sup>18</sup>

Gandhi has often called a charismatic leader because of his mass appeal. But more than his charismatic appeal it is his ability to transform individual’s quest for personal spiritual power and self cultivation into techniques for social action is in evidence in this work in Champaran. He was more revolutionary than charismatic.<sup>19</sup>

Thereafter, Gandhi organized the Satyagraha movement of peasants in Kaira against the collection of land revenue which they could not pay due to failure of crops. In Kaira the state of the crops during the 1917-18 season was the immediate issue at stake in the agitation Gandhi led, though, as in the case of the indigo issue in Champaran, it need to be set in the context of war-time change and distress if its full impact is to be

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<sup>18</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p.65

<sup>19</sup> Anima Bose, *Mahatma Gandhi A Contemporary Perspective*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1977, pp. 44-45

realized.<sup>20</sup> The agitation was first started in January 1918, by the local branch of the Home Rule League, and was taken up by the Gujarat Sabha which advised cultivators to withhold payment of Land Revenue if the anna value of their crops was below a certain figure. People were persuaded by the Sabha not to pay their land revenue and to allow their land and cattle etc. to be forfeited. <sup>21</sup>“In Kheda”, Gandhi said “the Government was high-handed and we had no option but offer Satyagraha against it. If we don’t succeed, the reason will be our own limitation and not anything inherent in Satyagraha.”<sup>22</sup>

Like Champaran in Kaira also the movement was started by the local people themselves. Gandhi wrote that “This struggle was not started by outsiders. Nobody instigated the Kheda public to launch it. There is no political motive behind it. It did not originate with the Home Rulers or with any barristers or lawyers as some people allege. I stand here to vouch for this. It was started by the tillers themselves. After the Political Conference at Godhra, some agriculturists in Kheda decided to request the Government for relief in view of the excessive rains. They wrote to me, informing me that they were legally entitled to relief and asking me

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<sup>20</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p.93

<sup>21</sup> *Home Political*, Deposit-18, May 1918, NAI

<sup>22</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.16, p. 288

whether I would help.”<sup>23</sup> Gandhi in a statement to the Press stated that “behind this movement there is no desire to discredit the Government, but that it is intended to assert the right of the people to be effectively heard. As both the Government and the agriculturists hold themselves in the right, his (Mr. Gandhi’s) suggestion was that in deference to public opinion the Government, should appoint as impartial committee of enquiry or gracefully accept the popular view.”<sup>24</sup> Government rejected the suggestion and insisted upon employing coercive measures for the collection of revenue. Farmers also did not show any sign of yielding to the threats.<sup>25</sup>

In Kaira also Gandhi got the support of intelligentsia. The alignment of the intelligentsia and peasantry again manifested itself in March 1919 when the Kheda Satyagraha was launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yajnik, N.M. Joshi, Shanker Lal Pareekh and several others.<sup>26</sup>

Even though Kaira Satyagraha failed in achieving the demand of the suspension of revenue it once again showed the power of the

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<sup>23</sup> *CWVG*, Vol.16, pp.456-457

<sup>24</sup> *Statesman*, 4/4/1918

<sup>25</sup> *Tribune*, 5/4/1918. *Home Political Collection*, Deposit, No.18, dated May, 1918, NAI.

<sup>26</sup> Sukhbir Chaudhary, *op. cit.*, p.36

Satyagraha struggle to organize the peasantry. Kaira hammered home the lesson of Champaran that Satyagraha could be used in virtually any situation of conflict, by literate and illiterate.<sup>27</sup> Satyagraha once again proved to be an effective weapon to organize the rural mass. In Gandhi's own words: "Be the outcome in the Kheda District what it may, the officials and the people are having a good education. There has been a tremendous awakening among the people. It was disloyalty even to talk of non-payment of taxes, but now people speak of it without fear."<sup>28</sup>

It was these two movements that gave Gandhi an opportunity to test his political weapons in India and which gave him the confidence to organize movements of all India character. He expressed his views about these two struggles like this: "My experience in Kheda and Champaran teaches me this one lesson, that, if the leaders move among the people, live with them, eat and drink with them, a momentous change will come about in two years. Make a deep study of this struggle; understand the worth of the people of Kheda; give all help you can by way of sympathy and verbal support. We shall not be arrogant in seeking justice. We seek it

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<sup>27</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p.106

<sup>28</sup> Letter to Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, *CWMG*, Vol.16, p.315

by awakening the Government to a sense of truth. The people will keep on fighting till they have secured justice.”<sup>29</sup>

After becoming a leading political figure in the Indian political arena, Rowlatt Satyagraha was the first major movement organized by Gandhi on an all India scale. But this movement couldn't arouse peasants on a large scale because the issue at stake was not directly related to the rural people and moreover, it was not a carefully planned movement.

It was the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-22 which actually gave all sections of Indian society an opportunity to fight for their grievances. The movement was clearly planned and non-violence was made a necessary pre-condition. In his blue-print for Non-cooperation Gandhi banned violence thus closing the door to the most obvious path of peasant participation.<sup>30</sup> At the initial stages the educated Indians got the greatest opportunity for withdrawing co-operation. The point where peasants could pressurize the government was initially restricted. Even then the peasant participation in Non-cooperation was considerable when compared with the Rowlatt Satyagraha.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.16., p.458

<sup>30</sup> Judith Brown, 'Gandhi and India's Peasants, 1917-22' in *Journal of Peasant Studies* Vol. 1, No.4, July, 1974, p.474

<sup>31</sup> Judith Brown, 'Gandhi....', *op. cit.*, p.475

In Non-operation as planned and sanctioned by Gandhi and Congress there was considerable peasant participation.<sup>32</sup> But the peasant movement during the Non-cooperation was largely independent of it. Gandhi himself stated that the kisan movement had received an impetus from Non-cooperation but was anterior to and independent of it.<sup>33</sup> M.N. Roy criticizes the Non-cooperation "Neither was the On-cooperation programme any better adapted to the agrarian condition of the country. On the contrary, it was precisely on the agrarian issue that the reactionary basis of the Congress was revealed."<sup>34</sup>

The discontent of Oudh peasants found its expression in the movement which was organized by the Kisan Sabhas<sup>35</sup> during 1920-22. Baba Ram Chandra was a local leader tried to organize the peasants. In order to broaden the movement he decided to bring in Mahatma and other educated urban leaders.<sup>36</sup> It was the work Gandhi done in Champaran

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.475

<sup>33</sup> Abha Pandey, 'Gandhi and Agrarian Classes', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XIII, No.26, July, 1, 1978, p.1078

<sup>34</sup> M.N. Roy, *The Aftermath of Non-Cooperation*, London, 1926, p.7

<sup>35</sup> In order to carryout the message of Home Rule in rural India and also to attract the peasants to the Home Rule Movement they founded the U.P. Kisan Sabha. Apart from this the peasants of Pratapgarh district initiated a Kisan Sabha through which they organized a mass movement. See Kapil Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt: Tenants, Landlords, Congress and The Raj in Oudh 1886-1922*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p.71

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91

which inspired Baba Ram Chandra to invite him.<sup>37</sup> In Crawley's words: "to some extent Gandhi appeared a more credible leader for a peasant movement, particularly after his work in Champaran in 1917."<sup>38</sup>

The movement, started without any outside help, was associated with Gandhi's name but 'Gandhi himself eventually repudiated its aims and leadership'.<sup>39</sup> Even though the movement was started independent of Non-cooperation, the Kisan Sabha adopted the Non-cooperation programme with its economic struggle.

During his visit to Oudh Gandhi addressed the peasants and gave some instructions to them. The most important among them are:<sup>40</sup>

1. We may not withhold taxes from the Government or rent from the landlord.
2. Should there be any grievances against zamindars they should be reported to Pandit Motilal Nehru and his advice followed.
3. It should be borne in mind that we want to turn zamindars into friends.

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<sup>37</sup> Kapil Kumar, 'Peasants Perception of Gandhi and His Programme Oudh, 1920-1922', *Social Scientist*, February, 1983, p.20

<sup>38</sup> W.F. Crawley, 'Kisan Sabhas and Agrarian Revolt in the United Provinces 1920 to 1921', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.5, 1971, p.96

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, P.95

<sup>40</sup> *Young India*, 9-3-1921. *CWMG*, Vol.22, p.404

With the efforts of Baba Ram Chandra the movement of Oudh peasantry intermingled with the national movement led by the Congress.<sup>41</sup> The peasants who participated in the movement indulged in activities which were against the instruction given to them by Gandhi. In fact, they were unaware of the Gandhian Programme. They only knew that Gandhi was a helper of the oppressed and they were anxious about their economic emancipation.<sup>42</sup> Due to the violent activities of the peasants Gandhi avoided all direct contacts with the leaders of the Oudh Kisan Movement during his visit to these areas.<sup>43</sup> Gandhi in his speech at Fyzabad condemned the violence of the peasantry. "Mr. Gandhi condemned violence most strongly and unequivocally, and said that he considered it a sin against God and man. He deprecated all attempt to create discord between landlords and tenants and advised the tenants to suffer rather than fight, for they had to join all forces for fighting against the most powerful zemindar, namely, the Government."<sup>44</sup>

Gandhi was criticized for his attitude towards the Oudh peasantry. Gandhi was much concerned about peasant violence but he ignored the violence practiced by the landlords on their tenants over a long span of

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<sup>41</sup> Kapil Kumar, *Peasants...*, p.120

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.160

<sup>44</sup> *The Leader*, 13-2-1921. CWMG Vol.22, pp.336-37

time. The peasants understood Gandhian non-violence to mean only refraining from the use of violence against human life; the looting and burning of taluqdari godowns was not regarded as a violent action by the peasants. No landlord or his agent was killed or injured during the “crowd action” in Oudh. Thus, as far as the peasants’ interpretation of non-violence was concerned, they were perfectly non-violent.”<sup>45</sup>

Bardoli Satyagraha was the next movement which was organized against the Government highhandedness. Bardoli clearly exposed “the strange way of the British Government in India in enhancing the assessment on land on the reports of irresponsible officers who have no one to control or check them.”<sup>46</sup> Arrangements were made in Bardoli to start Civil Disobedience Movement in 1922. Due to Chauri-Chaura incident it was cancelled. But the preparation made there politically educated the masses which later on enabled to organize the successful Bardoli Satyagraha and the movement was carried completely on Gandhian method. “Nevertheless, the leaders did not fail to understand the mood of the ryots and launched the famous Satyagraha of 1928 which was

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<sup>45</sup> Kapil Kumar, ‘Peasants...’, p.26

<sup>46</sup> Articles/Speeches by Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru Papers*, (pre 1947) Part III, Sl. No. 25, NMML.

hailed as a model of Gandhian technique.”<sup>47</sup> The well advertised triumph of Bardoli peasants put heart into the Indian peasantry and evoked again their hopes of being able to successfully rise against the Government.”<sup>48</sup>

After the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement Gandhi started his constructive programme through which he kept in contact with the masses. When in 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement was started Gandhi could array a wide range of masses behind him. “The first phase saw the high point of bourgeois participation in towns and controlled peasant mobilization on issues selected by the Gandhian leadership (salt, no-revenue, picketing of liquor shops, and non-payment of *chaukidari* tax) in villages.”<sup>49</sup> Even though ‘no rent’ was not in the agenda it was later accepted because of the “pressures for no-rent were mounting as prices fell and the U.P. Congress had to reluctantly sanction it in October 1930”.<sup>50</sup>

The next important political struggle was the Quit India Movement of 1942. Comparing to all other movements it was in this movement the peasants played a central role. “During the 1942 August Revolution, it

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<sup>47</sup> Sunil Sen, *Peasant Movements In India – Mid-Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1982, pp.32-33

<sup>48</sup> N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Saraswathi, *op. cit.*, p.65

<sup>49</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India – 1885-1947*, Macmillan India Limited, Madras, 1995, p. 292

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.296

was the Indian peasant who played the most heroic, dynamic and effective role. Students and urban middle classes too contributed much. But peasants excelled themselves".<sup>51</sup> The 1942 movement demonstrated how Mahatma Gandhi's faith in peasants has been fully justified and also how peasants have grown to be the principal revolutionary force in nation we owe all this to Mahatma Gandhi. We hail him as the father of our Modern Peasant Movement.<sup>52</sup> They succeeded in establishing their rival Governments in certain areas.<sup>53</sup> But it appeared that the Kisan Sabha had split up in to factions. One of the factions had declared itself entirely against the policy of the Congress in regard to the Second World War. It was not open to any Congressmen to associate himself with any organization which deliberately flouts vital decisions of the Congress and runs down the Congress.<sup>54</sup>

Gandhi really wanted to forge unity between all the classes of the Indian society against the common enemy. The class harmony he propagated against the British resulted in a 'duality' in Gandhi's ideology and actions. "Gandhi treated British colonial interests as a distinctly non-

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<sup>51</sup> N.G. Ranga, *op. cit.*, p.82

<sup>52</sup> N.G. Ranga's Presidential Address in the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the All India Kisan Congress held at New Delhi on 21-11-1946, *N.G. Ranga Papers 1934-86*, NAI.

<sup>53</sup> For more details of the revolutionary activities of peasantry see, N.G. Ranga, *op. cit.*, pp.82-83

<sup>54</sup> Speeches by Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (pre 1947), Part III, File Nos. 70-105, Sl. No.89*, NMML

Indian category and so long as peasant interests were adversely and directly affected by the Government, Gandhi defended peasant interests with vigour. But when peasant interests were circumscribed by indigenous landed interests the Congress under Gandhi counseled mutual trust and understanding and compromised continuously in favour of Indian vested interests.”<sup>55</sup> He tried to seek a solution to the conflict between zamindars and kisans in a non-violent way by means of converting oppressor and being just and fair to oppressed.

The mobilization of peasantry was based on the principle of non-violent class struggle.<sup>56</sup> Gandhi wanted to avoid the class struggle between the zamindars and peasants because he feared that “for the British it would be divide and rule, while for nationalist forces it would be divide and destroy.”<sup>57</sup> Crawley criticized Gandhi’s method of resolving the class conflict. He wrote “...it was a Swaraj in which the tenant would still pay his rent and communal and class conflict latent in the agrarian agitation would be unresolved.”<sup>58</sup> Whenever there broke out any conflict between the peasantry and zamindars he tried to contain the movement and kept himself away from such movement.

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<sup>55</sup> Abha Pandya, *op. cit.*, p.1077

<sup>56</sup> Needless to say, here class struggle is not in a Marxism sense. It denotes a social group.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80

<sup>58</sup> W.F. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p.108

Later Gandhi made certain changes in his attitude towards the peasant zamindar antagonism. It was due to the influence of the Congress Socialists on him. The change in his attitude was very much clear from the answers he had given to Louis Fischer's questions. The excerpts of the interview:<sup>59</sup>

L.F. What would happen in a free India? What is your programme for the improvement of the lot of the peasantry?

G. The peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it.

L.F. Would the landlords be compensated?

G. No. That would be fiscally impossible. You see, our gratitude to our millionaire friends does not prevent us from saying such things. The village would become a self-governing unit living its own life.

Two difficulties stood in the way of the Congress in laying down the broad outlines of an economic programme for the masses. One was the lack of uniformity of the land laws in various parts of the country and

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<sup>59</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.82, p.406

the other was the fear of many Congressmen lest they irritate and antagonize the powerful classes like the big capitalists and the landlords.<sup>60</sup>

Any movement which seeks to become a mass movement must necessarily have an economic programme for the masses. An appreciation of the fact that the only solid basis of a revolutionary movement is an economic programme of radical betterment of the masses led the Congress to make several vague, but none the less significant gestures which were meant to win over the masses. To some extent they succeeded in winning the sympathy of the people, but they did not translate themselves sufficiently into the day to day economic life of the people to give them an irresistible movement.

Some time in May or June 1928 the A.I.C.C. adopted a resolution in Bombay (at the instance of the U.P.P.C.C.) which dealt with the removal of all exploitation of workers and peasants. In October or November 1928 the outlines of an agrarian programme were discussed in the presidential address of the U.P. Provincial Conference at Jhansi by Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji's eleven points were essentially parts of an economic programme and some of them dealt with the peasantry. They were written however from the view point of the Gujarat Peasantry and

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<sup>60</sup> *Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (pre 1947)*, Sub. F. No. 50, NMML

laid stress on the reduction of land revenue by 50%. Congress did not do anything to irritate any group – Zamindar or Capitalist.<sup>61</sup>

It was argued that in reality Gandhi exercised a restraining influence on the revolutionary potentiality of the peasants.<sup>62</sup> The pacifying influence of Gandhi on peasantry was considered as one of the weakness of Indian peasant movements.<sup>63</sup> More over, Kapil Kumar criticizes Gandhi for not taking into consideration the humiliation and exploitation of the peasantry. In his view Gandhi was influenced more by the landlords' interest than by the plight of the peasants.<sup>64</sup>

What ever be the criticisms it was Gandhi who for the first time tried to mobilize the peasantry in a big way and make them participate in the national movement. True, the All – India Peasants Congress had come to knit all the peasants together under the aegis of a National Congress which laid the foundations for the growth of the new consciousness and familiarized the peasants with the potent idea of their national unity.<sup>65</sup> His concepts and ideas of the political struggle were capable of moving the

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<sup>61</sup> Agrarian Movement in U.P. and the Oudh Rent Amendment Act, 1931, *Jawaharlal Nehru Papers*, Part III, Sub. F. No. 50

<sup>62</sup> Kapil Kumar, 'Peasants' ..., p.19

<sup>63</sup> Kathleen Gough, 'Indian Peasant Uprisings', *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Hereafter EPW), Vol. IX, No.32,33,34, August, 1974, p.1391

<sup>64</sup> Kapil Kumar, 'Peasants' ..., p.25

<sup>65</sup> N.G. Ranga, 'Indian...', p.84

peasantry. "Certainly the Gandhi ideal of non-violence, firmly linked up with the religious beliefs of the peasantry, contributed to the development of a mass struggle for emancipation and helped to draw the peasantry."<sup>66</sup>

Ulyanovsky considers that Gandhi and Gandhism were a strong connecting link between the national bourgeoisie and the broad masses of the peasantry.<sup>67</sup> Gandhi with his unique method of struggle mobilized the peasantry of rural India who were the bulk of the population thus giving the national movement a true national character.

#### **B) GANDHI AND LABOURERS:**

The working class in India constituted only a small part of the total population. Modern industries began to develop in India only during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The industrial development took place in the field of cotton and jute. The important industries were the textile industries of Bombay, Kanpur and Nagpur and the jute industry of Bengal. The working class of these industries and the railway employees constituted the major share of the working class. But the workers of these industries were not organized on modern lines.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Prof. Ulyanovsky, *Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*. Punjabi Publishers., New Delhi, 1970, p.7

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>68</sup> The numerical strength of the industrial workers remained insignificant and moreover they were semi-proletariat in the sense that they were not completely

The first labour organization to be formed in India was the Bombay Millhands' Association which was established by Lokhanday in 1890.<sup>69</sup> A number of Unions came into existence after that. But the first organization on the lines of a modern trade union was the Madras Labour Union which formed at the behest of B.P. Wadia in the year 1918.<sup>70</sup>

Most of the earlier organizations were established by the 'outsiders'. And they established it out of humanitarian considerations. The ignorant, illiterate workers were not in a position to take upon themselves the task of organization. These 'trade Unions' 'were not as organic growth out of the working class'.<sup>71</sup>

Indian National Congress, being middle class organization, was not much interested in the struggles of industrial workers during the early years. Situation changed after the partition of Bengal in 1905 and with the

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divorced from their village bonds and were unskilled. The pressure of unemployment was a threat to the security of jobs. And because of all these reasons it took a long time to organize themselves. See, for details, Chamanlal Revri, *The Indian Trade Union Movement An Outline History 1880-1947*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1972, p.30.

<sup>69</sup> Harold Crouch, *Indian working Class*, Sachin Publication, Ajmer, 1979, p.58. Chamanlal Revri refuted the assertion that Bombay Mill-hand, Association as the first labour Organization on the basis that it had no organized body, no roll of membership, no funds and no rules and moreover it had hardly any influence over the masses Chamanlal Revri, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>70</sup> V.B. Karnik, *Indian Trade Unions- A Survey*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay 1978, p.24.

<sup>71</sup> Harold Crouch, *op. cit.*, p.58.

emergence of Tilak as a leader. The mass base of the Congress now widened. When Tilak was sentenced to a term of eight years in jail in 1908, the textile workers of Bombay went on a strike for about a week.<sup>72</sup> This was one of the first occasions that the workers were drawn into nationalist politics.<sup>73</sup>

The First World War marked a remarkable change in the character of the Indian Working Class. Economic conditions of the workers became worse during the years of war due to the rise in prices. With the entrance of Mahatma Gandhi the national movement spread far and wide and the workers in the cities were drawn into the movement. The soldiers' who had been to Europe during the war, brought with them the ideas of racial equality and aspiration for a better life. These ideas and aspiration which spread in cities and villages affected the outlook of many workers.<sup>74</sup>

It was the middle class leaders who organized the workers. Most of them did out of humanitarian consideration. The Congress leaders took interest in the working class question only to widen the mass base of the movement. And often they subordinated the social conflicts to the

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<sup>72</sup> V.B. Karnik, *op. cit.*, p.11.

<sup>73</sup> Harold Crouch, *op. cit.*, p.59.

<sup>74</sup> For detailed description of the factors which helped the growth and development of Trade Unions see, V.B. Karnik, *op. cit.*, pp.28-30.

political objective. They never became full time working class leaders. It was also true in the case of Gandhi also. Gandhi who became the prominent leader of the congress also followed the basic attitude of the Congress in the working class question.

Workers movement in Ahmedabad Textiles Industry was the first instance in which Gandhi came in contact with the working class of India. In contrast to the earlier movements which he organized against the imperialists this was against the indigenous capitalist class. Gandhi, who became a powerful leader after the successful Satyagrahas of Champaram and Kheda, was contacted by Ansuya Sarabhai, sister of Ambalal Sarabhai and a social worker working in the working class districts of Ahmedabad. Gandhi was involved in the Kheda Satyagraha at that time. So he dismissed the suggestion of Ansuya Sarabhai to organize the workers movement. But after the Kheda dispute was settled Gandhi took up the issue at the behest of Ambalal Sarabhai, the mill owner and the Collector of Ahmedabad.<sup>75</sup>

The dispute at Ahmedabad started when the mill owners announced in January 1918 the withdrawal of the 'plague bonus' which

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<sup>75</sup> Sujata Patel, 'Class conflict and workers' movement in Ahmedabad Textile Industry, 1918-23', *EPW*, May 19-26, 1984, p. 853.

had been granted to the workers during the previous year following the outbreak of an epidemic. But the workers protested against this and demanded a 50% increase in their wages. But Gandhi after studying the situation advised the weavers to demand only 35% increase instead of 50%.<sup>76</sup> “As in Kaira, so in Ahmedabad, Gandhi prepared a pledge for the satyagrahis, the Ahmedabad pledge stating that they would not resume work without a 35% increase and that they would remain law-abiding during the lock-out. This was the anchor of the Satyagraha, but its strength depended on the daily mass meetings Gandhi began to hold for the weavers, at which he gave a daily discourse and issued a series of leaflets<sup>77</sup> on the situation.<sup>78</sup>

The workers have resolved:

- (1) that they will not resume work until a 35 per cent increase on the July wages is secured;
- (2) that they will not, during the period of the lock-out, cause any disturbance or resort to violence or indulge in looting, nor damage any property of the employers for abuse anyone, but will remain peaceful.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi's...*, p.116.

<sup>77</sup> There were all together 17 leaflets of which one was written by Shankarlal Banker and the rest by Gandhi. *CWMG*, Vol.16, Leaflet Nos.1-17, pp. 285-348.

<sup>78</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi's...*, pp.116-117.

<sup>79</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. No.16, p.286.

But mill owners were not ready to concede their demand. "It is in this context that Gandhi first introduced the concept of arbitration."<sup>80</sup> As days went the movement organized by Gandhi began to decline. The number of workers who enthusiastically participated in the mass meetings organized by Gandhi began to decline. "Clearly, Gandhi had lost his hold over the workers".<sup>81</sup> When Gandhi became aware of the fact that the workers were moving away from him and his movement is going to decline "Gandhi declared a general strike and shifted his meetings to the mornings to prevent the workers from breaking the strike."<sup>82</sup> When Gandhi found that this also couldn't make much difference in the attitude of the workers and they were going back to the mills 'Gandhi announced his intention of fasting until a settlement was reached or all the workers left the mills.'<sup>83</sup> The purpose of the fast was defined in the leaflet no.15 issued on March 16, 1918. This leaflet was self explanatory about the ideas and aims of the fast. The contents of the leaflet No.15 follows:

"It is necessary to understand the motive and significance of Gandhiji's vow to fast. The first thing to remember is that this is not intended to influence the

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<sup>80</sup> Sujata Patel, *Op.cit.*, p.853.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 854.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.854.

<sup>83</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi's...*, p.118.

employers. If the fast were conceived in that spirit, it would harm our struggle and bring us dishonour. We want justice from the employers, not pity for us. If there is to be any pity, let it be for the workers. We believe that it is but the employers' duty to have pity for the workers. But we shall be ridiculed if we accept 35 per cent granted out of pity for Gandhiji. Workers cannot accept it on that basis. If Gandhiji exploited relations with the employers or the people in general in this manner, he would be misusing his position and would lose his good name. What connection could there possibly be between Gandhiji's fast and the issue of workers' wages? Even if fifty persons resolve to starve themselves to death on the employers' premises, how can the employers, for that reason, give the workers a 35 per cent increase if they have no right to it? If this becomes a common practice for securing right, it would be impossible to carry on the affairs of society. Employers cannot and need not pay attention to this fast of Gandhiji, though it is impossible that Gandhiji's action will have no effect on them.

We shall be sorry to the extent the employers are influenced by this action. But, at the same time, we cannot sacrifice other far-reaching results that the fast may possibly bring about. Let us examine the purpose for which the fast has been undertaken. Gandhiji saw that the oath was losing its force with the workers. Some of them were ready to break their pledge out of fear of what they thought would be starvation. It is intolerable that ten thousand men should give up their oath. A man becomes weak by not keeping a vow and ultimately loses his dignity as man. It is, therefore, our duty to do our utmost to help the workers to keep their oath. Gandhiji felt that, if he fasted, he would show through this how much he himself valued a pledge. Moreover, the workers talked of starvation. 'Starve but keep your oath' was Gandhiji's message to them. He at any rate must live up to it. That he could do only if he himself was prepared to die fasting. Besides, workers said they would not do manual labour, but said, all the same, they stood in need of financial help. This seemed a terrible thing. If the workers took up such an attitude, there would be utter chaos in the country. There was only one way in

which Gandhiji could effectively teach the people to submit to the hardships of physical labour and this was that he himself should suffer. He did manual work, of course, but that was not enough. A fast, he thought, would serve many purposes, and so commenced one. He would break it only when the workers got 35 percent (increase in wages) or if they simply repudiated their pledge. The result was as expected. Those who were present when he took the vow saw this well enough. The workers were roused; they started manual labour and were saved from betraying what was for them a matter of religion. The workers have now realized that they will secure justice at the hands of the employers only if they remain firm in their oath. Gandhiji's fast has buoyed them up. But they must rely on their own strength to fight. They alone can save themselves."<sup>84</sup>

A settlement was reached in the morning of March 18.<sup>85</sup> "The mill owners decided to send the issue to the arbitration board of Anandshankar Dhruv. Meanwhile, at Gandhi's insistence, the workers were paid a 35 per cent increase on the first day, 20 percent on the second, and the mean of

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<sup>84</sup> *CWVG*, Vol.16, p.337-38.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

the two 27.5 per cent for the rest, to prove that neither party had finally won.<sup>86</sup> Sujata Patel says that “While the mill owners were completely taken aback by the strength of organization and continuity of purpose shown by the workers, some of them, specifically Ambalal Sarabhai, were worried about the implications of the working class mobilization on the hitherto elite-oriented politics of the city. They were sure however, that they had won the first round of struggle. It was only the moment that made them yield and agree to the establishment of the arbitration board of Anandshankar Dhruv in 1918. Also, the industry was making high profits and the workers held the key to this prosperity. By the reasoning of some of the mill owners led by Sarabhai, if Gandhi held the loyalty of the workers, then they should come to an understanding with Gandhi. A 35 per cent increase was indeed “a small matter” if an alliance with him could guarantee a strike moratorium.<sup>87</sup> In Sujata Patel’s opinion the Gandhian method of solving the dispute between the capitalists and the working class benefited the capitalist and not the working class. Chandavarkar also enjoyed a similar view when he said that “the mill

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<sup>86</sup> Sujata patel, *op. cit.*, p.854

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 854.

owners, like local officials, recognized as early as 1918 that Gandhi's charisma might serve to restrain the working classes."<sup>88</sup>

After the Ahmedabad mill strike Gandhi never tried to interfere in the question of the working class and he tried to confine his trade union activities within Ahmedabad and that too in a restricted manner. "In the Ahmedabad strike Gandhi had seemed to be rising as a champion of the Left. Actually it stopped him from becoming so. To make a policy of leading one section of Indians against another – even against the pernicious pupils of western capitalism – would have meant too sharp a rupture with his habits of mind. Instead he devoted himself to national rebirth and tried to infuse it with his own spirit. He never engaged so deeply again in the battles of industry. But he did not desert the workers of Ahmedabad."<sup>89</sup> The Marxist writers criticized Gandhi by saying that he organized the movement in such a way as to protect the interest of the bourgeoisie. E.M.S. points out that "the way in which he led this struggle and gradually evolved what is commonly known as "Gandhian trade unionism" is of great importance in the evolution of our national movement, in the evolution of bourgeois leadership over the working-

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<sup>88</sup> Rajanarayan Chandavarkar, *Imperial and Popular Politics, Class, Resistance and the State in India, c.1850-1950*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.303

<sup>89</sup> Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi – A Study in Revolution*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, p.171

class movement”<sup>90</sup> In the words of Irfan Habib, “It seems, however, that despite this first use of fast as a weapon, the Ahmedabad success had no important sequel in trade unionism; his anxiety not to hurt that Indian mill-owners’ interests unduly always inhibited any support to militant working-class action.”<sup>91</sup> But Gandhian method “has resulted in good relations between the textile workers and mill owners of Ahmedabad.”<sup>92</sup>

In the leaflet which was issued on March 19, 1918 Gandhi laid down his own ideas about the employer- employee relationship. It was through the leaflets that he issued during the Ahmedabad Mill Hand’s strike he put forward his ideal of industrial relations and the methods through which and industrial dispute should be solved. Gandhi believed that an objectively correct wage could be determined. He insisted the workers that only ‘truthful’ claims should be made. The wage demand should be made on the basis of the financial condition of the employer and of the industry as a whole. But once it is decided it should be an uncompromisable objective. Then both the parties should convince each other of their claims. And they should appoint a respected arbitrator. If the employers refused to accept the arbitration, the workers had to go on

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<sup>90</sup> E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism*, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1958, p.21

<sup>91</sup> Irfan Habib, ‘Gandhiji’, *Addressing Gandhi (125 years of Mahatma Gandhi)*, Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, New Delhi, 1995, p.13

<sup>92</sup> J.B. Kripalani, *op. cit.*, p.78

strike which would continue until their demands were met. In Gandhi's view a strike was justified only if other means of settlement had failed.

The system of dispute settlement through arbitration was considered as the main contribution of Gandhi to industrial relations. But it had its own disadvantages also. According to Chandavarkar "arbitration proceedings, which appeared equitable in theory, were quite the opposite in practice, for they tended to favour the stronger side in any dispute – which for the most part meant the employers."<sup>93</sup>

### **Labour and Capital:**

Gandhi believed that "in the struggle between capital and labour it may be generally said that more often than not the capitalists are in the wrong. But when labour comes fully to realize its strength, I know it can become more tyrannical than capital. The mill-owners will have to work on the terms dictated by labour if the latter could command intelligence of the former. It is clear, however, that labour will never attain to that intelligence. If it does, labour will cease to be labour and become itself the master. The capitalists do not fight on the strength of money alone. They

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<sup>93</sup> Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *op. cit* p.284

do possess intelligence and tact.<sup>94</sup> He believed in reality class war was one between intelligence and unintelligence. The solution he recommended to better the conditions of labour were:

- (1) The hours of labour must leave the workmen some hours of leisure.
- (2) They must get facilities for their own education.
- (3) Provision should be made for an adequate supply of milk, clothing and necessary education for their children.
- (4) There should be sanitary dwellings for the workmen.
- (5) They should be in a position to save enough to maintain themselves during their old age.<sup>95</sup>

In order to settle the disputes between the capitalists and the workers Gandhi advised the traditional method of settlement<sup>96</sup> and along with that he supported the organization of Labour Unions. In his words:

“Strikes, cessation of work and *hartal* are wonderful things no doubt, but

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<sup>94</sup> *CWVG*. Vol. 19, pp.386-387.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.387.

<sup>96</sup> The method of arbitration is considered as ‘indigenous’ and sometimes as uniquely Indian. In the words of Harold Crouch: Infact the Gandhian approach is not distinguished from the western approach by this concept which of course is quite compatible with the western approach. The differences go much deeper and concern attitudes more than the formal machinery of settlement. A western trade unionism would be quite prepared to accept voluntary arbitration if, in the circumstances, he thought it would lead to higher wages or better conditions, but he would be equally prepared to use other tactics if the circumstances were different. Although in practice Gandhian trade unionists do use other methods, they tend to believe that voluntary arbitration is somehow superior. The western trade unionist is concerned with results. The Gandhian is concerned with means and ideally would be prepared to sacrifice results if the means were not entirely pure. Harold Crouch, *op. cit.*, p.110.

it is not difficult to abuse them. Workmen ought to organize themselves into strong Labour Unions, and on no account shall they strike work without the consent of these Unions. Strikes should not be risked without previous negotiations with the mill-owners. If the mill-owners resort to arbitration the principle of *panchayat*<sup>97</sup> should be accepted. And once the *panch* are appointed, their decision must be accepted by both the parties alike, whether they like it or not.<sup>98</sup> But when Anasuyabehn made preparation to found a union Gandhi's advise to her was that "it was responsible work and that, though we may have taken it up with the idea of serving the workers, if later we failed to shoulder the responsibility adequately we might, instead of serving the workers, do them much harm".<sup>99</sup> In his speech at the meeting of Mill Hands, Ahmedabad, on February 25, 1920<sup>100</sup> he clearly stated that "to those of you who believe that the unions we are establishing are for the purpose of fighting or coercing the mill-owners or that we shall be able to use these unions for such purpose, I would advise not to join the proposed union at all. I have never done anything in my life to coerce owners or harm their interests,

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<sup>97</sup> The traditional Indian practice of getting local disputes settled by the *panch*, a permanent committee of five elders chosen by members of the community.

<sup>98</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 19, p.388.

<sup>99</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 19, p.420

<sup>100</sup> This was the meeting in which the workers of the spinning departments of various mills had met to consider the formation of a labour Union, to approve its rules and adopt the necessary solutions.

and I will never allow myself to be an instrument in this. Only, if they try to suppress the workers, I will be ready to gave up my life to save them. By establishing unions, we do not wish to intimidate the mill-owners but to protect the workers, and we certainly have the right to do this.<sup>101</sup> In a speech on Rights and Duties of Labour, Madras on August 15, 1920 Gandhi said that ‘A nation may do without its millionaires, without its capitalists, but a nation can never do without its labour -----as labour becomes organized, strikes must becomes few and far between and as your mental development progresses further you will find immediately that the principle of arbitration replaces the principle of strikes.<sup>102</sup> His advice to the strike leaders were:

- (1) There should be no strike without a real grievance.
- (2) There should be no strike, if the persons concerned are not able to support themselves out of their own savings or by engaging in some temporary occupation, such as carding, spinning and weaving Strikers should never depend upon public subscriptions or other charity.
- (3) Strikers must fix an unalterable minimum demand and declare it before embarking upon their strike.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *CWVG*, Vol. 19, p.422.

<sup>102</sup> *CWVG*, vol. 21, pp.167-170,

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.24, p.285.

In an interview to "The Bombay Chronicle" when Gandhi was asked to further his own independent ways of organizing labour he replied that: "I want real co-operation between labour and capital. I shall convince the labourers that in many things they are to blame themselves instead of blaming the capitalists. As in the political so in the labour movement, I rely upon internal reform, i.e., self-purification. Such reform will command equitable treatment from employers. Throughout my experience both in South Africa and India, I have always laid the greatest stress on the principle that labourers must evolve strength from within. Then capital will become a real servant of labor. I seek to achieve co-operation between capital and labour, in the same way as I seek to bring co-operation between India and England. <sup>104</sup> Gandhian hold on the Ahmedabad workers was consolidated through the Textile Labour Association of 1920. <sup>105</sup> According to J.B. Kripalani "In India today there is no union better organized and more financially stable than the Ahmedabad Mill Mazdoor Union. None has more real and paying membership. None has again more institutions attached to it in the shape of crutches, day and night schools for children and adults, boarding

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<sup>104</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 38, p.233.

<sup>105</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p.186

houses, Harijan institutions, cooperative stores and the rest.”<sup>106</sup> But the view of the Marxist historians was in contrast to this view. They criticized Gandhi for curbing the revolutionary spirit of the workers and thereby placing bourgeoisie in a dominant position. According to E.M.S., “This was, of course, not the first time that Gandhiji resorted to a fast. This, however, was the first time that he resorted to it in order to check the militancy of the fighting people. It has added significance in that he was using it, not in relation to a movement in which all classes were participants, but in a working-class struggle. His success in this experiment was an invaluable lesson for the class of which he was the representative, the bourgeoisie. It showed them that here was a technique of struggle which could at once rally the masses and keep them away from militant action.”<sup>107</sup> And some of them consider this as a factor which confined the Gandhian trade unionism within Ahmedabad. In the words of Sumit Sarkar, “It is significant, however, that this Gandhian model, which rejected not only politicization along ‘class-war’ line but also militant economic struggles, never spread beyond Ahmedabad. Gandhi himself, unlike many other nationalist leaders, kept strictly aloof from the AITUC right from the beginning, long before the Communists became

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<sup>106</sup> J.B. Kripalani, ‘Gandhian Terminology’, *AICC Paper*, 1936, NMML

<sup>107</sup> E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *op. cit.*, p.22

important within it.”<sup>108</sup> But Gandhi was of the opinion that the situation was not yet ripe for the organization of the labourers as whole. It becomes very clear from his own words that he organized the Ahmedabad mill workers on an experimental basis. Gandhi in one of his letter to Shapurji Saklatvala replied that “....do not think that my labour work unlike khaddar work is merely confined to Ahmedabad. If labour elsewhere will accept my guidance, I would certainly organize it all over. But I am content with guiding Ahmedabad and hope that if Ahmedabad proves successful, it will be copied by the whole of India.”<sup>109</sup>

As against the view of the Marxists that Gandhi was trying to control the workers, Chandavarkar points out that within Gandhi's account there was a possibility that once the worker became aware of his strength and attain the 'intelligence and tact' of the capitalists they would be in a position to demand to own capital that they had helped to create. So what Gandhi aimed was the greater empowerment of the workers.<sup>110</sup> But this was overlooked by the Marxist critics. The subordinate position that the working class question got in the ideology of Gandhi led them to believe that Gandhi as a spokesperson of bourgeoisie. It was serious error

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<sup>108</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.186

<sup>109</sup> CWMG, Vol.39, p.302

<sup>110</sup> Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *op. cit.*, p.287

made by his critics that they failed in contextualising the working class-capitalist conflict in the wider political context.

### **C) GANDHI AND THE LEFT:**

Withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement disillusioned many who had enthusiastically participated in it. Simultaneously, socialist principles also started gaining momentum in India. After 1923, several socialist forces came into existence. Communist Party of India as a party based on Marxist ideology was formed in 1925. They asked its members to enroll themselves as the members of the Congress and work within the Congress and form a strong leftwing within the Congress. They were of the opinion that the failure of the Non Cooperation movement was due to the lack of support of workers<sup>111</sup>. So they tried to organize workers and peasants. Their motto was “No life without Swaraj and No Swaraj without workers.”<sup>112</sup> Up to 1928 Indian communist groups on the whole tried to work in the nationalist mainstream even while sharply criticizing the Congress leadership for its many compromises with imperialism.

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<sup>111</sup> President’s address during the first Indian Communist Conference, in 1925, *First Indian Communist Conference Papers – 1925*, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

The influence of communism over the national movement was checked during 1929 by the government's policy of repression and also due to the sectarian policy followed by the communists and they themselves stayed away from Congress by declaring it as a class party of the bourgeoisie<sup>113</sup>. Communist Party of India considered the "left" element in the Indian National Congress - Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose etc., as the most dangerous obstacle to the victory of the revolution and that a ruthless war must be waged on the left national reformists.<sup>114</sup> The Ultra-leftism of early 1930s resulted in splitting the CPI into mutually hostile groups and general isolation from the nationalist mainstream. The Comintern dismissed Civil Disobedience Movement as an "operational manoeuvre" forced on a reluctant Congress by the "pressure of the masses"<sup>115</sup> But most of the communist participated actively in Civil-Disobedience Movement<sup>116</sup>. After the withdrawal of the movement many young persons who participated in it or in Revolutionary terrorist

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<sup>113</sup> Bipan Chandra, et.al, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p.302

<sup>114</sup> 'India and Communism' compiled in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, 1933. *History of Freedom Movement Papers, B37/3*, NAI

<sup>115</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India - M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1971, p.153

<sup>116</sup> Soli Batliwala, a Parsee member of the leading committee, told Victor Kiernan that during Civil Disobedience some Communist like himself had rubbed shoulders in jail with Congressmen, and a sort of 'Old prison tie' freemasonry had emerged. Victor Kiernan, *The Communist Party of India and the Second World War - Some Reminiscences, 1987* Typescript, Acc. No. 1132, NMML, New Delhi.

organizations were attracted by Socialism and Marxism and they joined the C.P.I after 1934. The model of Soviet Union, unaffected by world economic depression and achieving progress through centralized planning, also attracted them towards Communism. But the government declared CPI illegal in 1934<sup>117</sup> and it remained illegal up to 1942. From 1935 onwards, as a part of their United Front Policy CPI started working in the Congress and CSP.<sup>118</sup>

Nehru, who was influenced by socialist ideas, gave the Congress a left direction. Subhas Chandra Bose also stood for a leftward direction of the Congress. Both of them formed the Independence of India League in 1928. The League operated as pressure group within the nationalist movement.<sup>119</sup> In 1929, Nehru became the President of the Congress,

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<sup>117</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1934 the Government of India declared the Communist Party of India, its Committees and Branches to be unlawful associations under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. *AICC File No.16/1935*

<sup>118</sup> “..... in 1936 Communists in India became more friendly to the Congress, exhorted people to join it, and tried to enter its local executives. From then onwards till the middle of 1939 that is for a little over three years, there was often much friction between the Communists and other elements in the Congress, but on the whole they functioned together and no major crisis arose. In particular, the stress by Communists on violent methods was in conflict with the Congress policy of peaceful action. But in practice this did not usually lead to conflict in action, except occasionally in local areas.” *AICC files P-1, P-3, P-4/1945*, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>119</sup> At the end of the year 1928, when the annual session of the Congress was held in Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi moved a resolution putting forward a national demand on the basis of Dominion Status. This was opposed by Bose, who pressed for a national demand on the basis of full independence. Though the latter was defeated by 900 votes to 1400, it was clear that the “independence school” in the Congress was by no means negligible. ‘Azad Hind’, *History of Freedom Movement Papers, B4/3*, NAI

which adopted the resolution of 'Purna Swaraj'. It was Gandhi who insisted on making Jawaharlal Nehru president of the Congress so that he could extend his hegemony over potentially divisive and rebellious forces.<sup>120</sup> Some of the Socialists viewed Nehru's acceptance of Presidency as a loss to the socialist cause. V. Chattopadhyaya wrote to Nehru "What we feared seems to have happened. When the cunning Mahatmaji proposed your name for the Presidency of the Congress, it was obvious that it was a move to kill you and opposition.....In your present position of President elected on the initiative of Gandhi, your hands will be completely tied and any action that you might have otherwise taken as a leader of the independence movement will be paralyzed by the very necessity of having to remain impartial inside the Congress."<sup>121</sup> But this fear appeared to be unwarranted at least in the period immediately following his accession. In the presidential address Nehru attacked Gandhi's pet 'trusteeship' solution for *zamindar* – peasant and capital – labour conflicts.<sup>122</sup>

Gandhi suspended the Civil-Disobedience Movement and replaced it by the constructive programme and also supported the council – entry

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<sup>120</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.282

<sup>121</sup> B.N.Pandey, edited, *The Indian Nationalist Movement 1885-1947 – Select Documents*, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979, p.98

<sup>122</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.283

programme of the Swarajists.<sup>123</sup> The leftists considered that it would side track the basic issue of struggle against colonial rule. Instead they want to continue the Civil disobedience movement. Subhas Bose and Vithal Bhai Patel issued a statement from Europe repudiating Gandhi's leadership.<sup>124</sup> M.N.Roy contended that "The Civil Disobedience campaign has failed under the burden of its own contradiction. It will fail again and again, unless it is freed from the cult of non-violence. But as soon as the Congress will throw off the paralyzing ballast of Gandhian ideology, it will find innumerable channels of mass activity open before it."<sup>125</sup> Nehru considered it as a 'spiritual defeat' and a surrender of ideals, a retreat from the revolutionary to the reformist mentality, and a going back to the pre - 1919 moderate phase.<sup>126</sup> He also attacked the notion of winning freedom through stages. To Gandhi's strategy of struggle - truce -struggle, he counter posed the strategy of struggle - victory or the permanent waging of mass struggle till independence was won.<sup>127</sup> Even though Nehru

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<sup>123</sup> The All India Swaraj Party had been revised in order to enable the Congressmen, who were not offering individual civil resistance. *AICC file no. G-21/1933*

<sup>124</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.331

<sup>125</sup> M.N.Roy, *Wither Congress?* Typescript, Sub.F.No.32, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>126</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 312. Later not only he accepted Gandhi's decision but also criticized the leftists for criticizing Gandhi. "It was little irritating to find people, who did little themselves, criticize others who had shouldered the burden in the heat and dust of the fray, as reactionaries. These parlour socialists are especially hard on Gandhiji as a arch reactionary, and advance arguments which in logic, leave little to be desired." Nehru, *An Autobiography*, (11<sup>th</sup> impression), Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1997, p.406

<sup>127</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p.314

pointed out the inadequacy of the existing nationalist ideology and stressed the need to inculcate a new, socialist or Marxist ideology<sup>128</sup> he did not approve of the moves being made then to start a separate socialist party.<sup>129</sup>

A group of young Congressmen who were disenchanted with the Gandhian strategy and leadership and attracted by the socialist ideology but were not in agreement with the prevalent political line of Communist Party of India tried to workout for an alternative strategy and formed Congress Socialist Party in 1934 under the leadership of Jaya parkash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Minoo Masani<sup>130</sup>. Ambiguities were there from the beginning, for the CSP wanted to remain within the Congress, but was sharply opposed to its leadership and ready to cooperate with non – Congress Leftist groups.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p.313

<sup>129</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 332

<sup>130</sup> They declared their task in the Meerut Thesis thus: “to develop the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement – a movement aiming at freedom from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation. For this it is necessary to wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism”. This task was adopted in the Meerut session on 20 Jan. 1936. Rai Akhilendra Prasad, *Socialist Thought in Modern India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1974, p.277, Minoo Masani, *Bliss Was It In That Dawn*, New Delhi, 1977, pp.43-47

<sup>131</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.332. CSP’s decision to function “simultaneously as the Left wing of the Congress and as a Marxist Socialist Party are responsible to a large extent firstly for the delay in the crystallization of the left wing and secondly for confusion regarding its aims and tasks”. V.B. Karnik, ‘The Right and the Left’, *Independent India*, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1939, p.147

In Sampurnanand's Thesis it was said that "if we are to function usefully as a Party, we must, while concentrating on the organization of Labour and the Peasantry, leave no stone unturned to expose the follies and reactionary policies of the Congress High Command, without deliberately irritating the rank and file. Comrade Jayaprakash is right enough in saying that the Congress should not be split up into socialists and anti-socialists but this is hardly avoidable, now that we are no longer a diffused group but a well organized party. This kind of behaviour on our part will either bring down upon us outlawry from the government or the Congress."<sup>132</sup>

Ideologically it was Nehru who "prepared the ground for the emergence of the forces of contending hegemony inside the Congress."<sup>133</sup> But Nehru refrained from joining the Socialists. "This was largely due to the Gandhi's skill in handling Nehru and to the latter's devotion to the nationalist cause above all other considerations"<sup>134</sup> But it was above all Nehru's understanding of the situation and his unwillingness to disrupt

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<sup>132</sup> Sampurnanand's Thesis, *AICC files no. G-23&G-24/1934*

<sup>133</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Struggle for Hegemony in India – 1920-47*, vol. II 1934 –41, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p.88

<sup>134</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *op. cit.*, p.240. Nehru wrote in his autobiography "Gandhiji had stated that there were temperamental differences between us. They were perhaps more that temperamental, and I realized that I held clear and definite views about many matters which were opposed to his. And yet in the past I had tried to subordinate them."- Jawaharlal Nehru, *op. cit.*, p.507

nationalist unity which made him to refrain from Socialists. He was convinced that the left could not provide an alternative either to Gandhi's leadership or methods and that only Gandhi could hold together the disparate groups, which together comprised the Congress, and only tactics based on non-violence offered any prospect of success.

Gandhi welcomed the formation of Congress Socialist Party. Even while welcoming the formation of the Congress Socialist Party Gandhi made it clear that he had some fundamental differences with them on the programme published in their authorized pamphlets.<sup>135</sup> He really had some basic ideological differences with the party, the most fundamental being his view that they were not pledged to non – violence.<sup>136</sup> Gandhiji had said that while disapproving of the methods of the socialists he approves of their aims.<sup>137</sup> The qualified welcome of CSP by Gandhi really made some of the Socialist leaders angry. Kamla Shankar Pandya said that “under the pretext of benevolent mentality and advice, the whole programme and the Socialist Party is sought to be ridiculed and prejudiced before the public”.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *CWMG*, vol. 65, p.6, statement to the press September 17, 1934.

<sup>136</sup> K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi and the Congress Socialist Party – 1934-48*, ABS Publications, Jalandhar, 1986, p.29

<sup>137</sup> P. Spratt, 'The History of Non-Violence', in *The Indian Review*, vol.XL, no.1 January, 1939.p.18

<sup>138</sup> Kamla Shankar Pandya quoted in K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p.29

Gandhi disapproved the frequent and unwarranted attack on the Congress Executive and its programme by the Congress Socialists. Gandhi told them plainly that “they should either be prepared to abide by the Congress decision without attempting to create unnecessary splits in Congress ranks or take over charge of the Congress machinery including its executive. He and other members of the executive were prepared to hand over control and make room for them if they so desires.”<sup>139</sup> And later he made it clear that “If they gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress. For me to be in active opposition should be unthinkable. Though I have identified myself with many organizations during a long period of public service I have never accepted that position.”<sup>140</sup>

After the withdrawal of Civil Disobedience Movement sharp difference of opinion started among the leftists and Swarajists within Congress. To avoid a split Gandhi supported the council-entry programme of Swarajists and also succeeded in convincing Nehru and the leftists that the withdrawal of the civil disobedience was dictated by the reality of the political situation.<sup>141</sup> That only civil disobedience had been discontinued,

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<sup>139</sup> Discussion with Socialists’ Deputation, July 27, 1934. CWMG Vol. 64, p.237

<sup>140</sup> CWMG, Vol. 65, p.6

<sup>141</sup> *The Hindu* reported that Civil Disobedience “has outlived its usefulness as a

the war continued.<sup>142</sup> More over, Gandhi championed Nehru for President in both 1936 and 1937 by overcoming considerable opposition from the right wing leaders. Gandhi felt that Nehru's elevation to the presidency would serve to wean him from the socialists and he assured his colleagues that if placed at the helm, Nehru would act responsibly and impartially in response to majority opinion among party leaders.<sup>143</sup> Gandhi's move irritated some of the Socialists especially when he backed Nehru second time for the President ship. M.R.Masani lamented that Nehru's acceptance has deprived the Congress Socialist Party "of its natural leader, who was so well fitted to lead it, to rally the radical forces."<sup>144</sup>

By 1935 most of the left groups joined the Congress. Despite their ideological and organizational differences the CPI, CSP, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and other Left groups and leaders all shared a common political programme which enabled them to work together after 1935 and make socialism a strong current in Indian politics. M.N.Roy also joined the Congress after his release from jail in 1936 and stressed the usefulness of the National Congress as an instrument in the struggle. He

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method – and that is the prevailing feeling in the country". Rangaswami Parthasarathy (Asstt.editor), *A Hundred Years of The Hindu*, Kasthuri & Sons Ltd., Madras, 1978, p.438.

<sup>142</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, pp.314-315

<sup>143</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *op. cit.*, pp.240-241

<sup>144</sup> M.R.Masani quoted in *Ibid.*, p.241

also argued that National Congress was a movement embracing a variety of classes and sub-classes. It was not the political party only of the bourgeoisie as regarded by the official Communists<sup>145</sup>. All of them formed a strong left wing within the Congress. The stage has thus been set for a major confrontation between Right and Left within the national movement.

In 1935 the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act of 1935. The Government thought of using the reforms in the Act to promote dissensions and a split within the Congress ranks on the basis of constitutionalist vs. non-constitutionalist and Right vs. Left.

Sharp difference of opinion started when Government announced election to provincial legislatures in 1937. Nehru, Subhas Bose, Socialists and Communists were against office acceptance.<sup>146</sup> But the counter-strategy that Nehru and leftists recommended was to enter the assemblies with a view to creating deadlocks and making the working of the Act impossible. Even though Gandhi opposed office acceptance he decided to

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<sup>145</sup> Suneera Kapoor and Kiran Kanta, 'M.N. Roy's Attitude Towards Indian National Congress' in *The Radical Humanist*, February 1997, pp.16-17

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.319

give a trial to the formation of Congress ministries especially the overwhelming mood of the party favoured this course.<sup>147</sup>

Congress won a majority of seats in the election. The election tour and election results heartened Nehru, lifted him from the slough of despondency, and made him reconcile to the dominant strategy of S-T-S.<sup>148</sup>

By early September 1938 Gandhi took an uncompromising attitude towards the left wing. Z.A.Ahmed of the Economics Department, AICC, and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Secretary, Foreign Department, of the AICC were forced by the working committee to resign their posts on the basis of a newly established policy that active socialists were to be excluded from the AICC Secretariat.<sup>149</sup> A day after the resignation Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* that in order to “preserve the purity of the Organization” all those who did not believe “in the necessity for observing truth and non-violence as condition of attainment of Swaraj...should automatically cease to belong to the Congress”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.321-322

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p.322

<sup>149</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *op. cit.*, p.279

<sup>150</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.73., p.434

In late September 1938, Gandhi came to the Delhi AICC meeting with a number of proposals which were intended to purify the Congress. He offered the resolution on civil liberties. Even though all attempts to defeat the resolution failed “fifty members of the AICC, including the Socialists, Communists, Royists and Sabhaites, staged a walkout amidst shouts of “Down with the Right Wing” and other slogans.”<sup>151</sup> This incidence convinced Gandhi that “the time had come for a showdown with the party left wing”<sup>152</sup> According to E.M.S. Namboodiripad after the formation of Congress Ministries and after conflicts developed on a large-scale between the provincial ministries and the rank and file Congressmen, the right-wing leadership thought that the phase of concessions to the left should end.<sup>153</sup>

The confrontation between the Left and Right became severe during the Congress Presidential election of 1939. Gandhi did not press the Congress ministries for ameliorative measures like tenancy reform and labour legislation; and this led to a crisis at the Tripuri Congress session where a majority of delegates, disenchanted with his stance, re-elected

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<sup>151</sup> John Patrick Haithcox, *op. cit.*, p.281

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p.281

<sup>153</sup> E.M.S. Namboodiripad, ‘Tripuri and After’, in *New Age*, June, 1954, p.28

Subhas Bose as President against Gandhi's candidate, Sitaramayya.<sup>154</sup> Gandhi and Right wing of the Congress disfavored President Subhas Chandra Bose's re-election in 1939. Gandhi and right wing equally and strongly felt that the Congress had enough radicalism as it had socialists as Presidents of the Congress from 1936 to 1938. Moreover, Gandhi feared that, in the impending war situation, a leftist President could possibly bring a head on collision with the British and that may prove to be major set-back to the cause of independence.<sup>155</sup>

Gandhi's leadership was specifically recognized by the same session, and Bose was soon compelled to resign<sup>156</sup>. Bose's success proved a failure to himself, because he could not form the working committee for which he wanted to secure Gandhi's prior assent, which however the latter was not willing to give. So Bose had to resign.<sup>157</sup> Bose could not get the support of the Congress Socialists and the Communists at Tripuri or after for they were not willing to divide the national movement, and felt that its unity must be preserved at all costs.<sup>158</sup> CPI General Secretary P.C.Joshi wrote in April 1939 that 'the greatest class struggle today is our national

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<sup>154</sup> Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.21

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213

<sup>156</sup> Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.21

<sup>157</sup> B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, 'Gandhi and the Indian National Congress - 2', in *Gandhi Marg* Vol.4, April 1960, p.154

<sup>158</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *India's...*, p.447

struggle' of which Congress was the 'main organ' and its unity must be preserved.<sup>159</sup> CSP remained neutral as they hoped that their neutrality would avoid disunity in the congress and also have an additional advantage of bringing Bose near to Gandhi.<sup>160</sup> But M.N. Roy criticized the leftists for supporting Gandhi in Tripuri and said, "The resolutions of the Tripuri Congress destroy the internal democracy of this great organization. It subordinates a gigantic mass organization to the will of an individual."<sup>161</sup>

Rajendra Prasad was elected in Bose's place. He nominated a working committee, consisting exclusively of right wing leaders that even Jawaharlal Nehru was kept out of it. And the new working committee was to convene a meeting of the AICC and adopt resolutions which prohibited Congressmen from offering, or organizing, any form of Satyagraha in the administrative provinces of India without the sanction of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned. This was intended to prevent Congressmen from participating in the innumerable peasant actions that were developing. Bose protested against this resolution. Considering his protest as a "grave act of indiscipline", Bose was

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<sup>159</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.374

<sup>160</sup> KC.Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p.218

<sup>161</sup> *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 3-6-1939.

“declared disqualified as the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and to be a member of any elective Congress Committee for three years as from August 1939”<sup>162</sup>

When Second World War broke out government declared India as a party of the war. This declaration made the Congress ministers angry and they resigned from the office. Both Gandhi and CSP opposed the war and Indian involvement in it. Gandhi’s opposition was more because of his creed of non- violence, while for the CSP it was for their anti imperialism. Even though he opposed war he made it clear that “there could be no question of striking a bargain with the government”<sup>163</sup>

With the exception of the M.N.Roy group<sup>164</sup>, which demanded unconditional support to Britain, the entire left stood for militant anti war struggle.<sup>165</sup> But there were difference of opinion among them. Bose wanted the left to split the Congress if it did not launch a struggle, to

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<sup>162</sup> E.M.S. Namboodiripad, ‘Tripuri...’, pp.30-31

<sup>163</sup> CWMG, October 17, 1938. The AICC in its Bombay resolution did not press the country’s claim to Swaraj for the duration of the war but demanded only the right to free expression of opinion about the war. Acharya Kirpalani’s Presidential Address in Nawadah Political Conference, *AICC file no. G-19/1934*

<sup>164</sup> M.N.Roy advocated unconditional support to the anti-fascist war. Suneera Kapoor and Kiran Kanta, *op. cit.*, p.21

<sup>165</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 382. The Communist Party of India, characterizing the war as an imperialist war, bitterly attacked the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi for not launching a mass struggle immediately after the war began for the emancipation of India. *AICC Files, P-1, P-3, P-5/1945, NMML.*

organize a parallel congress but both CPI and CSP differed in this view. They don't want to disrupt the 'national united front' but to persuade and pressurize its leadership to launch a struggle.<sup>166</sup>

Left as a whole criticized Gandhi and Congress leadership for not launching a mass movement. The CSP decided upon offering healthy and constructive criticism to Gandhian negotiations – approach and delaying of action. They were not hostile towards Gandhi. CSP decided to prepare the people for launching a movement. In which they considered support as invaluable and they worked for bringing Gandhi to mass civil disobedience. But Gandhi was trying to postpone struggle. Gandhi's attitude really irritated the socialist leaders.

The repressive policies of the Government changed the overall political situation. It made the Congress leadership to think of starting a movement against the British. By the end of 1940 Congress once again asked Gandhi to take command.<sup>167</sup> Gandhi decided to start a limited Satyagraha on individual basis<sup>168</sup>. Individual Satyagraha had a dual purpose – while giving expression to the Indian people's strong political feeling, it gave the British government further opportunity to peacefully

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<sup>166</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 451-52

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453

<sup>168</sup> *AICC Files P-1,P-3,P-5/1945*

accept the Indian demands.<sup>169</sup> Gandhi restricted the scope of the movement. It was not to be a mass movement and it would avoid as far as possible causing embarrassment to the Government.<sup>170</sup> But the individual Satyagraha did not satisfy the Congress Socialists who had aimed at mass civil disobedience.<sup>171</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan felt that individual Satyagraha had become a farce.<sup>172</sup> The general attitude of the CSP was to take advantage of its 'failure' and move towards some sort of direct action.<sup>173</sup> Communist party also got angry over the Congress decision.<sup>174</sup>

With the entry of Japan in the war and the German invasion of Russia, the situation changed altogether. The Communists began to characterize the War as a 'Peoples War'. The Polit Bureau of the CPI formally adopted the 'People's War' policy on December, 15, 1941.<sup>175</sup> By

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<sup>169</sup> Bipan Chandra, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 453, Johannes H. Voight, 'Cooperation or Confrontation? War and Congress Policy, 1939-42', D.A. Low, (ed.), *Congress and the Raj: Facets of Indian Struggle, 1917-1940*, New Delhi, 1977, p.363

<sup>170</sup> Acharya Kripalani's Presidential Address in Nawdah Political Conference, *AICC file no. G-19/1934*, NMML. Francis G. Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution: The Quit India Movement*, New Delhi, 1971, p.227

<sup>171</sup> K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p. 260

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263

<sup>174</sup> The Communist of October 1940 wrote on the Individual Satyagraha "The struggle is a jolly merry-go-round. Shut up you irrelevant scoffer. It is a nation's solemn....non-violent...suicide. In the phase of its decay Gandhism can pursue an anti-struggle and compromising policy....The future under Gandhism is to lose all that the Congress has built up so far." *AICC Files, P-1,P-3,P-5/1945*, NMML

<sup>175</sup> Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Bombay, 1960, p.193

January 1942 CPI decided to support Britain in anti – Fascist war.<sup>176</sup>

Nehru also wanted to extend support to the British efforts.

To seek the support of India in war, Britain sent Cripps Mission to India. The Cripps Mission failed in its attempt. The failure convinced even Nehru and Gandhi, who did not want to do anything to hamper the anti – fascist war effort, the inevitability of a struggle.<sup>177</sup> Things were now moving towards total confrontation. Gandhi urged the British withdrawal from India. Gandhi also feared that the “presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait”<sup>178</sup> In this he was supported by the CSP in what finally emerged as the Quit India movement of August 1942.<sup>179</sup> Nehru remained opposed to the idea of a struggle at the initial stages, but gave up at the end<sup>180</sup> because he felt that the bitter anti-British feeling among Indian people was likely to develop rapidly into pro-Japanese feeling.<sup>181</sup>

Gandhi made it clear that he was not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete independence. He gave the mantra of ‘Do or

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<sup>176</sup> *AICC Files, P-1,P-3,P-5/1945*, NMML

<sup>177</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 457-58

<sup>178</sup> *Harijan* dated 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1942. Resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee on July 14, 1942. *CWVG* vol.82,p.258

<sup>179</sup> K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi..*, p. 265

<sup>180</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 458, and Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 389

<sup>181</sup> M.S.Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, *Quit India – The American Response to the 1942 Struggle*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1979, p.206

Die' to his followers.<sup>182</sup> According to Sumit Sarkar, "The summer of 1942 found Gandhi in a strange and uniquely militant mood."<sup>183</sup>

Quit India resolution made it clear that if the Congress leadership was removed by arrest "Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India."<sup>184</sup> K.C.Mahendru says that ".....it was Narendra Deva who exercised his influence on Gandhi to bring him to overcome the strong adherence to non – violence."<sup>185</sup> Narendra Deva and Gandhi jointly prepared the draft resolution that Gandhi sent to the July 1942 meetings of Congress Working Committee.<sup>186</sup> This resolution contains some socialist demands also. The Princes, Jagirdars, Zamindars and propertied and moneyed classes derive their wealth and property from the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially power and authority must belong.<sup>187</sup> According to E.M.S.Namboodiripad "Gandhi's two hour speech at the AICC session had not a word addressed to the workers or the peasants" and that "the overwhelming majority of the

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<sup>182</sup> Message to the country on Aug.19, 1942. *CWMG*, vol.83,p.208

<sup>183</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 388

<sup>184</sup> *CWMG* vol.83, p.454

<sup>185</sup> K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p. 271

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>187</sup> *CWMG* vol.83, p.446

people, i.e., the workers and peasants, did not come into Gandhi's picture at all; they had no special role to play except in making sacrifices around the slogan of "Do or Die".<sup>188</sup>

Government reacted quickly and arrested all top order leaders of the Congress. The movement then came under the control of Congress socialists like Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherally, Purushottam Trikamdas, Ram Manohar Lohia and some second rankers in the then Congress hierarchy. The movement was mostly carried on by workers, who had been driven underground.<sup>189</sup> The 'Congress Radio' that was set up by Usha Mehta broadcasted speeches prepared by Lohia and Patwardhan in Gandhi's name.<sup>190</sup>

In the whole movement Congress socialist were in the lead, but also active were Gandhian ashramites, Forward Block members and revolutionary terrorists as well as other congressmen.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 'Quit India Struggle – Revolutionary or Gandhian?', in *New Age*, June, 1954, p.28

<sup>189</sup> Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi – The Last Phase*, Vol-1, Book-1, Navajivan Press, second edition, 1965, p.17

<sup>190</sup> K.C.Mahendru. *Gandhi...*, p. 278. It was Gandhi's message of "Do or Die" which kept them going even at the face of Government repression. "Congress Radio Calling" Typescript, *Misc. Items Acc.No.99*, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>191</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 463

Gandhi at initial stage did not try to protest against the people who indulged in violence. Viceroy told Gandhi that he and Congress were responsible for the disturbances.<sup>192</sup> Even when British Government asked him to condemn the violence of the people in the Quit India Movement he refused to do so, instead he held government responsible for it<sup>193</sup>. He commenced a fast in February 1943 as a protest against the repressive measures of the government.<sup>194</sup> Meanwhile the Congress socialists criticized the Gandhi for disowning violence.<sup>195</sup> When R.R. Diwakar met Gandhi during the fast, he told Diwakar to stop violence to property also.<sup>196</sup> This created a rift between Gandhi and Congress Socialists. Soon after the end of fast in March 1943 the Congress Socialists and Gandhites parted their company.<sup>197</sup> After coming out of the jail he perceived violence as the cause for the failure of the Quit India Movement.<sup>198</sup> This made the Congress Socialists feel that Gandhi had let them down.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. III, p. 536.

<sup>193</sup> In his letter to Lord Linlithgow dated Jan.29, 1943, he wrote that "the Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of the arrests .....". *CWVG vol.83*, p.281

<sup>194</sup> *CWVG*, vol.83,p.281

<sup>195</sup> *CWVG*, Gandhi's reaction to violence, March 3, 1943

<sup>196</sup> K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p. 280

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281

<sup>198</sup> *CWVG*, May 6, 1944, and in a letter in June 9, 1944

<sup>199</sup> Pyarelal, *op. cit.*, p. 39-40

Jayaprakash Narayan felt that Congress disowned the movement because it had failed.<sup>200</sup>

Despite the official position taken by the Communist Party “Hundreds of communists at local and village levels participated in the movement.”<sup>201</sup>

Leftists criticized Gandhi for making compromise with Government and halting the movement. For them any shift from the mass movement “meant abandonment of the goal of Swaraj”<sup>202</sup>. Leftists believed that “the masses were always ready to go forward, to ceaselessly struggle till victory was achieved”<sup>203</sup> But Gandhian strategy was based on a “specific understanding of the limits to which both the people and Government could go”.<sup>204</sup>

Gandhi was aware of the class conflicts that existed in the Indian society. But he did not want to foment and keep it up.<sup>205</sup> He opposed the

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<sup>200</sup> ‘A Revolution is disowned because it failed’, Extract from an article written by Jaiprakash Narain during his detention in Lahore, *Home Political (I)* 1945 – 4/3/45, NAI.

<sup>201</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, , p. 468

<sup>202</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *op. cit.*, p.79

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, pl79

<sup>204</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p.511

<sup>205</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 68, p.74

Socialist theory of class-war<sup>206</sup> and said the “class war is foreign to the essential genius of India.”<sup>207</sup>

A.K. Das Gupta compared Gandhi and Marx on the ground that both believed in class conflict. He argued that both “Marx and Gandhi accept the existence of social conflict as a fact, and both bring a scientific attitude to bear on their programme for resolving it.”<sup>208</sup> But the way they intended to resolve the conflict was different.

Gandhi opposed the Marxian theory of class war<sup>209</sup> which resulted in the violent elimination of one class by another. Against this he stood for non violent class-struggle. He believed that non violent non cooperation was the best way to stop economic exploitation. According to him, “If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Either is dependent on the other. Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer

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<sup>207</sup> *The Pioneer*, 3-8-1934

<sup>208</sup> A.K. Das Gupta, ‘Gandhi on Social Conflict, *EPW*, Vol.II, No. 49, December 7, 1968, p.1976.

<sup>209</sup> The discourse of class was alien to Gandhi’s intellectual and political idiom. When he addressed the issue, it was within terms whose scope and reach were wider and more expansive. It would be highly reductivist to measure his precepts and practice, and their appeal to workers, strictly by the ideology of class. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that the ‘class interests’ of the working classes, far from being uniform and homogeneous, were themselves fractured by relations of power, emanating from village and neighborhood, caste and religion, gender and, indeed, the very process of production. – Rajnarayan Chandvarkar, *op. cit.*, p.285

with the capitalist instead of remaining his slave.”<sup>210</sup> In his class war there were victory for both the exploiter and the exploited. “Based upon soulforce, it is an unique way of conflict resolution understanding between the so called antagonistic classes.”<sup>211</sup>

According to Gandhi our socialism should be based on non violence and the harmonious cooperation of labour and capital and the landlord and the tenant.<sup>212</sup> His non violent class struggle implied in the double refusal – the refusal to accept wrong and refusal to commit wrong i.e. the total refusal to be a party in wrong both as does or as done to.<sup>213</sup>

Instead of accentuating the class antagonisms he wanted to unite all the classes. For this he asked the capitalists and landlords to hold the wealth they acquired as a trust on behalf of the toilers in factories and fields, who produced that wealth. The Trusteeship Formula is:

1. Trusteeship provides a means to transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

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<sup>210</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 51, p.296

<sup>211</sup> K.C. Mahendru, ‘Gandhi’s Idea and Technique of Nonviolent Class Struggle’, *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 7, No.3, June, 1985, p.287

<sup>212</sup> *CDWMG*, Vol. 64, p.232

<sup>213</sup> K.C. Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p.83

2. It does not recognize and right of private ownership of property, except inasmuch as it may be permitted by society for its welfare.
3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
4. Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.
5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.
6. Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.<sup>214</sup>

Gandhi always stood for the unity of the opposites. His concept of trusteeship is an example of that. "It reveal a leading feature of his revolutionary tactics, in which the apparent opposites – the intuitive and

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<sup>214</sup>It was published by Pyarelal. *Harijan*, 25 October, 1952.

alienated components of human nature – are yoked together.”<sup>215</sup> As a practical man Gandhi knew that total renunciation was an abstraction. Therefore, he put up with private possessions as a concession to those who would voluntarily use the whole of it for the benefit of mankind. Actually, his trusteeship implied an attitude of non possession.<sup>216</sup> Even though his concept of trusteeship was based on a very good ideal the practicability of this concept is in doubt.

Many of the Socialists ridiculed Gandhi’s idea of trusteeship. Only a very few capitalists came forward to translate this concept into action.

Gandhi criticized the Socialists and Communists for propagating the class-war ideal. He said that “It is solely out of a desire for cheap leadership that these so-called leaders have brought the working class under their influence.”<sup>217</sup> Against the class-war approach of the CSP he drafted a resolution on the subject and got it passed by the Congress Working Committee on June 18, 1934 at Bombay which maintained that “confiscation and class-war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence.”<sup>218</sup> To appease the Congress Socialists he later on clarified that the

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<sup>215</sup> N.G.S. Kini, ‘Techniques and Tools of Gandhian Revolution’, in *Gandhi Marg*, Vol.15, No.2, April, 1971, p.116

<sup>216</sup> K.C. Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p.86

<sup>217</sup> *CWVG*, Vol.96, p.156

<sup>218</sup> K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p.70

Resolution did not relate to the “bonafide non-violent Socialists.”<sup>219</sup> This was seen as a kind of strategy to unite the classes as also to dislodge the Marxian/Socialist propaganda for class conflict.<sup>220</sup>

Gandhian strategy was designed to keep the antagonistic classes together and united. It was during the Gandhian “that the capitalists as a class also came into the movement and came to support it actively.”<sup>221</sup> His movement was very well funded by the capitalist classes. So he did not want to annoy them. The Leftists often criticized Gandhi for helping capitalists. The extension of the social base of the movement to the capitalist class was as important and a new feature of the movement in its Gandhian phase as its extension to the workers and peasants.<sup>222</sup> Bipan Chandra argues that “the right was to be criticized and opposed when it objected organization of the exploited classes or class struggles around their class demands or opposed the ideology of class struggle but not when it proposed class adjustment and confining of class struggles within the parameters of broad unity of all sections of the Indian people.”<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> K.C. Mahendru, ‘Gandhi’s Idea and Technique of Nonviolent Class Struggle’ in *Gandhi Marg*, August, 1985, p.286

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p.286

<sup>221</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1996 (Reprint), p.137

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.137

<sup>223</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Indian...*, p.75

The Socialists and Communists criticized Gandhi without considering the importance of class collaboration of the Indian people at that period when the nation movement was going on. They accepted the Marxian principle of class antagonism as such and dubbed Gandhi as an agent of the bourgeoisie without analyzing the existing political condition of India.

Even though leftists found many of Gandhi's principles unacceptable and tried to oppose his programme they failed to provide an alternative or positive programme. They failed to understand that "it is not possible to organize an effective movement on the basis of a negative programme – a mere programme of opposition to policies and actions of the present leaders of the Congress."<sup>224</sup>

Left also failed to get a mass following. Through out the period they remained weak both organizationally and ideologically. Disunity among the Leftists also led to their failure. CPI's decision to penetrate the CSP and capture it caused disunity among the Leftists. CSP leaders considered the move of the CPI to penetrate the CSP as dangerous to the

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<sup>224</sup> V.B. Karnik, 'The Right and the Left' in *Independent India* dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 1939, p.147

very existence of CSP.<sup>225</sup> Masani was determined to keep the Communists out of CSP. Masani's stand really irritated the Communists. In a letter to Bradley Joshi wrote that 'you know how our boys feel about Masani, they would tear him limb from limb'.<sup>226</sup>

It was the failure of the left parties to work in unity and also the influence of Gandhi which never let them to emerge as a full fledged movement. Birla told Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, after the second Round Table Conference that "He alone is responsible for keeping the left wing in India in check."<sup>227</sup> Also both of them, some of the left critics and Gandhi, moved to each other in later periods. For example M.N.Roy who began his career as an outspoken critic of Gandhi gradually came to appreciate Gandhian methods and Gandhi also moved in his final years towards a more socialistic understanding of the need for an element of class conflict in the struggle for greater social equity.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Masani's Statement, *AICC 36-38/1945*

<sup>226</sup> Victor Kiernan, *op. cit.*

<sup>227</sup> G.D. Birla quoted in S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.34

<sup>228</sup> David Hardiman, *Gandhi: In His Time and Ours*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2003, p.6

## Appendix

### GANDHI AND REVOLUTIONARIES

Gandhi, before starting the Non-Cooperation movement was well aware of the fact that unless he could gain the support of the revolutionaries, his movement, especially in Bengal, where the revolutionaries were strong enough, could never be a successful one. He invited the revolutionaries also to participate in the struggle and give his Non-Cooperation movement a trial<sup>1</sup>. The request of the *Jugantar* delegates to add in the draft of the non-cooperation resolution the demand for Sawaraj in addition of the reprisal of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, was readily accepted by Gandhi<sup>2</sup>. *Jugantar* delegates supported the resolution in the Calcutta session of the Congress.

Some of the eminent leaders from Bengal like B.C Pal, C.R. Das etc. and Bengal delegates voted against the resolution. C.R. Das asked the *Anushilan Samiti* delegates to oppose the resolution in the Nagpur session. But the efforts of the revolutionaries to oppose Gandhi were foiled, as C.R. Das himself became a convert to Gandhi's policy. The reasons for

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<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, August, 11, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Nimai Pramanik, *Gandhi and the Indian National Revolutionaries*, Sribhumi Publishing Company, Calcutta, 1984, p.25

this change are not clearly understood. Instead of the opposing the ratification of the resolution he strongly supported it.<sup>3</sup>

The *Jugantar* revolutionaries, who were opposing the Gandhian movement before the Nagpur Congress changed their decision after the Congress. Some of them joined the movement subsequently and others retired from politics<sup>4</sup>. But Gandhi and C.R. Das failed to convince the efficiency of his new technique of fight to the Anushilan revolutionaries.<sup>5</sup> But later they also joined the movement and worked sincerely for the Gandhian movement.<sup>6</sup> The revolutionaries who had been waging a relentless struggle against British imperialism stopped their movement to give a fair chance to the Gandhian experiment.<sup>7</sup> The leaders and workers of both the revolutionary parties in India – *Anushilan Samiti* and *Jugantar* joined the movement and those who did not join the movement refrained from the revolutionary activities in order to give the Gandhian movement an opportunity to succeed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.25-27

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34

<sup>7</sup> S. K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, 'The Congress and the Revolutionaries in the 1920s' in *Social Scientist*, Vol.10, no.6, June 1982, pp.21-21

<sup>8</sup> Nimai Pramanik, *op. cit.*, p.35

But the revolutionaries joined the movement taking 'Non violence' as a 'policy' not as a 'creed'<sup>9</sup>. More than that they had their own specific interest in widening the mass base using the organizational network of the Congress.<sup>10</sup>

While the non co-operation movement was in progress, no major terrorist activity was planned.<sup>11</sup> However, the sudden withdrawal of the movement disillusioned many of them. They now began to look for alternatives. *The Hindustan Republican Association* formed under the leadership of Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, in 1924 as 'an offshoot' of the Anushilan Samiti of Bengal offered a rallying ground to these young persons. In this sense the national revolutionary movement was the product of the Gandhian movement of 1920-22.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the co-operation extended by the revolutionaries the Mahatma remained hostile to their method.<sup>13</sup> In his speech at Belgaum Congress he vehemently criticized the revolutionaries by saying that they are retarding country's progress. But in his criticism of the revolutionaries he was not always supported by some of his followers. The resolution

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35

<sup>11</sup> S. K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 21

<sup>12</sup> Nimai Pramanik, *op. cit.*, p.127

<sup>13</sup> S. K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.22

criticizing Gopinath Saha's action moved at the AICC at Gandhi's instance in June 1924 was passed by a majority of only 8 votes.<sup>14</sup>

During the period 1924-1925 both the revolutionaries and Gandhi engaged in polemical arguments. The Revolutionaries not only criticized Gandhi but also put forward their own ideas and programme. Gandhi vehemently criticized the ideas, programme and methods of the revolutionaries. The Revolutionaries now had to fight "a battle on two fronts all the time,"<sup>15</sup> one with Gandhi and another with the British government. Gandhi always tried to keep a distance with the revolutionaries. Gandhi always tried to keep a distance with the revolutionaries. Manmath Nath Gupta wrote that "Gandhi, in order to show that he made no common cause with the revolutionaries, condemned them in season and out of season. Whenever there was an overt act, he took the opportunity to bitterly condemn them."<sup>16</sup> But many of his fellow Congressmen, especially Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose, did not share his feelings towards revolutionaries. Revolutionaries received financial assistance from leaders like Motilal Nehru.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22

<sup>15</sup> Manmathnath Gupta, *They Lived Dangerously-Reminiscences of a Revolutionary*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1969, p.70

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70

<sup>17</sup> S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.23

The Congress, which met after the Kakori prisoners were hanged, passed special resolution deploring the callousness of the Government and also offered the heartfelt sympathy to the families of the victims.<sup>18</sup> Gupta wrote that “Gandhi of course continued to hold his tongue, but it was a sort of tacit defeat for that this resolution was passed in the Congress at all”.<sup>19</sup> He went further saying that “Gandhi always went out of his way to congratulate the Viceroys whenever they escaped the bombs of the revolutionaries, but for revolutionaries, when they were victims of British atrocities he had nothing to say.”<sup>20</sup>

The Kakori case was a major setback to the revolutionaries.<sup>21</sup> They tried to reorganize and under the leadership of Chandrashekhhar Azad adopted socialism as their official goal and changed the name of the party to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army) in September,

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<sup>18</sup> Manmathnath Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.264

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.264

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.264

<sup>21</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989, p.248

1928.<sup>22</sup> The twin goals of HSRA were the liberation from foreign rule and the restructuring of Indian society along Socialist principles.<sup>23</sup>

HSRA is best known for three incidents: the murder of J.P.Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of Police in Lahore, on December 17, 1928 in retaliation of his attack on Lala Lajpat Rai; the Assembly Bomb incident on April 8, 1929, protesting the certification of the Viceroy of two bills which had been rejected by the Assembly; and the bombing of the Viceroy's train on December 23, 1929.<sup>24</sup> Reaction of Gandhi towards these acts would be helpful in understanding his attitude towards them.

Gandhi called the murder of Saunders a “dastardly act” which it was feared, “decidedly retard the progress of this quiet building”.<sup>25</sup> Gandhi reacted to the Assembly Bomb explosion by bitterly denouncing the bomb throwers.<sup>26</sup> The Assembly Bomb explosion led to the arrest of revolutionaries including Bhagat Singh. They started hunger strike in the jail for the better treatment of the political prisoners in the jail. Even

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<sup>22</sup> Corinne Friend, ‘The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army: A Revolutionary Arm of the Freedom Movement’ in Harbans Singh and N. Gerald Barrier, (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh, The Panjab Past and Present*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1996, p.367

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.363

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.364

<sup>25</sup> Gandhi quoted in S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.24

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24

though they won sympathy of the people outside Gandhi kept quiet on the matter.<sup>27</sup>

After the attempt of the revolutionaries to blow up the Viceroy's train Gandhi presented a resolution before the Congress denouncing the bombing and urged the Congress to pass it unanimously. The resolution also congratulated the Viceroy and party on their narrow escape.<sup>28</sup> The resolution was passed by only a narrow majority of 81 votes.<sup>29</sup>

Both Nehru and Bose supported the revolutionaries.<sup>30</sup> Revolutionaries got general appreciation in the Congress circles. In spite of this Gandhi's "great prestige and power persuaded even those Congress men who did not agree with his ideas to vote with him. The revolutionaries were concerned that because of Gandhiji's denunciation they would become isolated and abandoned by those who had in the past helped them."<sup>31</sup>

To an extent these increased revolutionary activities and the deepening mood of violence in India made Gandhi to start the Civil

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<sup>27</sup> Manmathnath Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.300

<sup>28</sup> Corinne Friend, *op. cit.*, p.376

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.376

<sup>30</sup> S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.25

<sup>31</sup> Corinne Friend, *op. cit.*, p.379

Disobedience Movement.<sup>32</sup> He considered inaction on his part would be an invitation to terrorists to take over the movement.<sup>33</sup> The enthusiasm of the revolutionaries to participate in the movement which witnessed before and during the Non-cooperation movement was conspicuous by its absence.<sup>34</sup>

The Gandhi – Irwin Pact of 1931 annoyed the revolutionaries much. There was only provision for the release of prisoners undergoing imprisonment in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement.<sup>35</sup> Lord Irwin in his letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1930 to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote that “....Local Governments would find it possible to release all persons convicted or under-trial for offences in connection with the movement not involving violence...”<sup>36</sup>

The leaders who previously supported the revolutionaries also didn't put any pressure on Gandhi. In a note written to Gandhi jointly by Pandit Motilal Nehru, Syed Mahmud and Jawaharlal Nehru, from Naini central prison dated August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1930 it was declared that “We have not

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<sup>32</sup> Rama Hari Shankar, *Gandhi's Encounter with the Indian National Revolutionaries*, Siddharth Publications New Delhi, 1996, p.112

<sup>33</sup> James W. Douglass, 'The Revolution is the Kingdom' in *Gandhi Marg*, Vol.15, no.2,

April, 1971, p.90

<sup>34</sup> Rama Hari Shankar, *op. cit.*, p.113

<sup>35</sup> Manmathnath Gupta, p.320

<sup>36</sup> *AICC Files No. G-30-39/1930, NMML*

claimed the release of those political prisoners who have been guilty of violence, not because we would not welcome their release, but because we felt that as our movement was strictly non-violent we could not confuse the issue. But the least we can do is to press for an ordinary trial for this fellow country-man of ours, and not by an extraordinary court constituted by an Ordinance which denied them the right of appeal and the ordinary privileges of an accused.”<sup>37</sup>

Gandhi in his discussion with Viceroy Irwin put forward the issue of Bhagat Singh’s execution as a “humanitarian issue” and considered it as “in appropriate” on his part to mention an issue, which had “no connection” with their discussion. And he desired suspension of sentence in order to prevent any “unnecessary turmoil in the country”. In conclusion he also told Viceroy that “I myself would release him, but I cannot expect any Government to do so. I would not take it ill even if you do not give any reply on this issue”.<sup>38</sup> In the Viceroy’s version of the discussion Irwin wrote that Gandhi did not ask for the commutation but

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<sup>37</sup> *AICC Files No. G-38/1930, NAI*

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Viceroy. Gandhi’s Report dated February 18, 1931. *CWMG*, Vol.51, p.155

only for the postponement in the present circumstance as it would have an influence for peace.<sup>39</sup>

The attitude of Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose on the issue really depressed the revolutionaries. “It was expected of Jawaharlal, who passed as a Youth leader, that he would put pressure on Gandhi in this matter. We inside the prison expected that Jawaharlal would advise Gandhi to break with the Viceroy, but he did nothing of the sort.....Not only, Jawaharlal but Subhas Bose at a later stage surrendered to Gandhi on this very matter.”<sup>40</sup>

In spite of the Gandhi – Irwin Pact of 5 March 1931 Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1931.<sup>41</sup> Soon after the execution of the revolutionaries when Gandhi reached the Karachi session of the Congress he was greeted with black flags and slogan like ‘Down with Gandhism’.<sup>42</sup> But he won over the situation. In his speech at Karachi Congress he said, “By the execution the Government have given the nation grave cause for provocation. It has shocked me too in as much as

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<sup>39</sup> *CWNG*, Vol.51, p.151

<sup>40</sup> Manmathnath Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.325

<sup>41</sup> Nimai Pramanik, *op. cit.*, p.161

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.162

my negotiations and talks had made me entertain a distant hope that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev might be saved.”<sup>43</sup>

The decision to hang Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev kept them in the political limelight. After the execution of these revolutionaries a spate of violent speeches and writings occurred and also demonstrations showing sympathy towards them. “But “the excitement subsided more quickly than was expected.”<sup>44</sup>

Discussions at the Congress Subjects Committee at Karachi clearly revealed that the method of procedure had been carefully planned to meet leftist opposition. As a sop to revolutionaries the Congress Executive brought forward a resolution “admiring the bravery and sacrifice” of Bhagat Singh and his associates, but disassociating the Congress from political violence.<sup>45</sup> The resolution was drafted by Gandhi and was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on behalf of Gandhi.<sup>46</sup> A great controversy arose on the wording of the resolution. Three amendments were proposed but when put to vote all of them were lost, while the original resolution was

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<sup>43</sup> CWMG, vol.51, p.304. *Young India*, 2-4-1931.

<sup>44</sup> Telegram sent by Viceroy to Sectary of State for India, London, dated 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1931, *Home, Political, File No. 33/I & K.W.*

<sup>45</sup> *The Times of India*, March 28, 1931

<sup>46</sup> S. K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, p.32

passed.<sup>47</sup> “There was not,” M.N. Roy said, “the ghost of a chance of overthrowing the god”.<sup>48</sup>

With the death of Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Surya Sen etc, the revolutionary terrorist movement got a set back in Punjab, U.P., Bihar and Bengal. Some of them joined the left parties and many others joined the Gandhian wing of the Congress.<sup>49</sup>

In 1937 Congress Ministries released the revolutionary prisoners. Nehru arranged a tea-party for them and gave them a lecture and concluded it by saying that should sparing in their public speeches.<sup>50</sup> The revolutionaries felt that the Congress had released them and they were demanding a price for this.<sup>51</sup>

In a reception organized at Allahabad for the released revolutionaries they made it clear that that they “had not eschewed revolutionary methods and that they “would not hesitate to revive the revolutionary movement.”<sup>52</sup> Gandhi disapproved the reception given to them and declared that “these reception were unseemly and Congress

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<sup>47</sup> Nimai Pramanik, *op. cit.*, pp.164-165

<sup>48</sup> M.N.Roy quoted in Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India – M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939*. Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1971, p.189

<sup>49</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *India's...*, p.258

<sup>50</sup> Manmathnath Gupta, *op. cit.* p.379

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.379

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.380

Committees should not be associated with such functions”<sup>53</sup> He banned such receptions as far as the Congress was concerned.<sup>54</sup> Gandhi’s disapproval could not kill the future receptions, but the revolutionaries certainly received a set back.<sup>55</sup>

Government’s repressive measures as well as the influence of Gandhi, whose opposition to the revolutionaries were consistent and unremitting, kept them under check. Gandhi’s influence and prestige turned away much potential support, which they would have got from some of the members of the Congress, and served to isolate them.<sup>56</sup> It can be concluded that the revolutionaries failed to get any sympathies from Gandhi. Gandhi, on his part, was not worried about the revolutionaries taking away his mass support. As we have seen, this was not the case in Gandhi’s relation with the Socialists.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.381

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.387-388

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.381

<sup>56</sup> Corinne Friend, *op. cit.*, pp.385-386

## Chapter - IV

### GANDHI AND MASS MOBILIZATION – PART II

#### MUSLIMS, DALITS AND WOMEN

In the last chapter we discussed the Gandhian strategy in mobilizing different social classes. In the present chapter we discuss the mobilization of social groups like the Muslims, Dalits and Women.

##### A) GANDHI AND MUSLIMS:

Muslim presence, even though it was minimal, was there in the Congress from the initial days onwards. But it was Gandhi who tried to give primary importance to Hindu-Muslim unity in order to ensure a unified attack against the colonial power. It was his South African experience which made him conscious of the importance of Hindu-Muslim Unity. It was on the question of the Hindu Muslim unity that his non-violence put its severest test. When Gandhi came to India, he gave importance to this in almost all of his speeches. "Hindus and Muslims should become united; that is the desire I have expressed at every place".<sup>1</sup> At the same time he was well aware of the fact that "This question cannot be solved finally. What happened in other countries will happen here.

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<sup>1</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 15, p.135

Hindus and Muslims will remain as two communities and this will do no harm to the country”.<sup>2</sup> So what he desired to make only a political alliance between these two communities.

The divisive tendencies among the Muslims were there from the initial stages itself which were reflecting in their reform movements and writings. The “psychology of Separatism” started from the days of Syed Ahmad Khan and it “ultimately led to the division of India in 1947”.<sup>3</sup> They preferred British Raj rather than a democratic polity which, they believed, would result in Hindu domination. Both in education and employment they lagged behind Hindus. This created a sense of insecurity and frustration and which reached its zenith with the foundation of the Indian National Congress. But with the Turkish question and annulment of partition of Bengal Muslim estrangement with the Government started. Now Muslim organizations also started considering the British Government as their enemy instead of their protector. This change of attitude resulted in a Hindu-Muslim *rapprochement*. This resulted in the Congress-League Pact of 1916 by which Congress theoretically accepted separate electorate. Gandhi also received a very warm welcome from the

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287

<sup>3</sup> B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi Pan – Islamism Imperialism and Colonialism*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1989, p.55

Muslim leaders when he came back to India. At the reception given to Gandhi in Madras by the Muslim League “a promise had been made to him and it was an unconditional promise to co-operate with him anything he might undertake on behalf of this country.”<sup>4</sup>

Before making any political alliance with the Muslims he tried to settle some of the issues which always kept the Hindus and Muslims on logger heads such as Hindi-Urdu controversy and Cow-Protection.

Gandhi found it very important to ally Muslims also on the side of the Congress as it would be very difficult otherwise to fight against the British with a section of the Muslims supporting the British. And more than that to make Congress a true national organization representing every section of society and thereby challenge the British claim of safe-guarding the minorities. In order to get the Muslim mass support he tried his best to befriend them by involving himself in some of the issues which were great concern for them. “As a practical idealist he had realized that before he approached the question of Hindu-Muslim Unity in India he should closely study the thoughts, sentiments and aspirations of the Muslims and try to win their confidence”.<sup>5</sup> Gandhi started making appeals to the

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<sup>4</sup> *The Hindu*, 26-4-1915

<sup>5</sup> Abid Husain, *Gandhiji and Communal Unity*, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1969,

Government for the release of the Ali Brothers from their incarceration. He was also aware of the Muslim feeling towards the Turkish question.

When Gandhi started his political career in India, with the call for a nation-wide hartal against Rowlatt Act, “Muslims, who had been aggrieved over the Khilafat issue and its uncertain future, participated in the movement in large numbers”.<sup>6</sup> Rowlatt Act gave Gandhi an opportunity to launch a movement against the government in an atmosphere when the Muslim population also was in a mood to fight against the Government. Gandhi made full use of the Muslim discontent over the British attitude towards the Khilafat and tried to make special appeal to the Muslim population. As expected Muslims participated in large numbers in Rowlatt Satyagraha and “hartal was complete in Muslim centers”.<sup>7</sup> Even in those areas such as UP which was “notorious for communal strife” both Hindus and Muslims attended and addressed the meetings.<sup>8</sup> A general feature of this movement was the unprecedented fraternization between the Hindus and the Muslims. “The Hindu-Muslim

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p.70

<sup>6</sup> D. Abul Fazal, ‘Muslims and the Rowlatt Act Satyagraha’ in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 63<sup>rd</sup> session, Amritsar, 2002*, Indian History Congress, Kolkata, 2003, p.733

<sup>7</sup> Abul Fazal, *op. cit.*, p.737

<sup>8</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi’s Rise to Power – Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972, p.173

amity during this agitation was widespread and remarkable, surprising to the government and even to the political leaders.”<sup>9</sup>

The fear of the Muslims about the future of Islam and their resentment at the Rowlatt Act<sup>10</sup> was at its height when Gandhi launched the Rowlatt Satyagraha. So when they found a reliable leader the Muslim mass extended their support to Gandhi. “The beginning of 1919 witnessed an infuriated Muslim mass and a position-loving leader entering into an understanding.”<sup>11</sup> But it also illustrated “Gandhi’s ability to draw individuals belonging to different castes, communities, and religions into a movement of protest against the British government”.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the great Muslim personalities such as M.A. Ansari, Ajmal Khan, Hasrat Mohani, Asaf Ali, Abdul Rahman, Asif Hussain Hasni, Shuaib Quershi, Abdul Bari, Faz-ul-Haq, Saiffudin Kitchlew etc. came to the political limelight and were in close contact with Gandhi.

Participation of Muslims in great numbers in the Rowlatt Satyagraha must have given Gandhi the confidence to take the issue of

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<sup>9</sup> Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement, Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982, p.70

<sup>10</sup> The Muslims considered Rowlatt Act as “weapon ready to meet the possible Muslim discontent at the conclusion that will be arrived at by the Peace Conference” - Abul Fazal, *op. cit.*, p.735

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.735

<sup>12</sup> Introduction by R.Kumar, in R.Kumar, (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics- The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, p.12

dismemberment of Khilafat and make it as a part of the Non-cooperation Movement. "Gandhi espoused the Khilafat cause because he saw it primarily as an anti-British issue, a means to bring the Muslims into the nationalist movement, and a big boost to his plans to reorganize and redirect the Congress into a mass movement."<sup>13</sup> Khilafat issue was not all that relevant to the real interest of the country. It was Gandhi's "shrewd perception that it was an issue on which mass Muslim feeling could be aroused."<sup>14</sup> And more than that the Muslim leaders who were in very good touch with Gandhi also found it favourable for them to make an alliance with Congress. By which once again they would get the opportunity to make the Congress accept them as the representatives of the Muslim community.

As Muslim leaders were interested in an immediate action they wanted Gandhi to launch a movement against Khilafat as early as possible. "Gandhi once again appeared on the scene with the announcement that he would lead the movement of Non-co-operation if the terms of peace with Turkey did not meet the sentiments of the

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<sup>13</sup> Gail Minnault, *op. cit.*, p.11

<sup>14</sup> Penderel Moon, *Gandhi and Modern India*, The English Universities Press Ltd., London, 1968, p.98

Muslims in India.”<sup>15</sup> At first he didn't give a concrete shape of the movement to be launched. It was started only as a movement against the wrongs done to the Muslim community. The 19<sup>th</sup> of March was fixed as a day of National mourning, - a day of fasting and prayer and *hartal*.

Khilafat issue gave Gandhi an opportunity to forge unity between Hindus and Muslims and more than that it gave him an opportunity to mobilize the Muslims. Without considering the consequences of mobilizing Muslim on religious issue, Gandhi took up the case of Khilafat. “He did not profess to go into its merits. It was sufficient for him that the Muslim demand did not offend against any ethical principle and that it had a mass appeal for the Muslims”<sup>16</sup>

It was decided to call for all India Khilafat day on Oct.17, 1919 as a mark of protest against the Peace Settlement. It was also decided to form the All India Khilafat Committee with Seth Chotani as the President and Shaukat Ali – in absentia – Secretary.<sup>17</sup>

Gandhi was against the idea of calling for a boycott of British goods along with the Khilafat movement. When Gandhi was asked to

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<sup>15</sup> Patabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress Vol. I*, S. Chand & Co., Delhi, 1969 (2<sup>nd</sup> reprint), p.191

<sup>16</sup> Penderel Moon, *op. cit.*, p. 198

<sup>17</sup> *The Bombay Chronicle*, Sept. 23, 1919

speak on the resolution for boycott of British goods at the Khilafat Conference held at Delhi on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1919, he very clearly stated that he was against the idea of Maulana Hasrat to call for boycott of British goods.<sup>18</sup> According to Gandhi “there is a world of difference between withdrawal of co-operation and boycott. It was a man’s privilege to withhold co-operation when he likes, but we must have regard for the opinion of the world before adopting any political step”<sup>19</sup>. As the question of Punjab was not directly concerned with the Peace Celebrations he was against the idea of including it also as an issue for the non-participation of the peace celebrations.<sup>20</sup> He was from the beginning itself not ready to discuss the issue of cow-protection and Punjab. Gandhi believed that if Hindus help the Muslims in Khilafat agitation then they may stop the slaughter of cows.<sup>21</sup> As a reply to this Maulana Abdul Bari in his speech said “I say that, whether they help us in the Khilafat issue or not, we and they are of one land and, therefore, it behoves us to stop the slaughter of cows. As a Maulvi, I say that, in refraining from cow-slaughter of our own free will, we in no way go against our faith. Nothing else has created so real a spirit of brotherhood between us as the magnanimity shown by

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<sup>18</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.19, p.137

<sup>19</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.19 p. 140

<sup>20</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.19, p. 140

<sup>21</sup> *CWMG* Vol.19, pp. 150-51

the Hindus on the Khilafat issue".<sup>22</sup> Gandhi said "Maulana Abdul Bari Sahib has shown us that this is a far simpler and easier way to ensure the protection of cows than to spend huge sums and quarrel with the Muslims for the purpose".<sup>23</sup>

Even though the Muslim leaders accepted Gandhi's idea of Satyagraha they were also doubtful about the practicability of it. Hasrat Mohani told Gandhi in one of the Khilafat discussions on January 27, 1920 that "I cannot say whether Satyagraha can always be a practicable proposition but, for this purpose and in these times, I too believe that there is no other weapon like it. I shall therefore certainly propagate it".<sup>24</sup> Gandhi had implicit faith on Ali Brothers and Hasrat Mohani. He remarked "the fate of the Khilafat case and the future peace of India depend largely on the wisdom of these three".<sup>25</sup>

A "manifesto" on the Khilafat question was released from Sabarmati Ashram Ahmedabad, on March 7, 1920. As a first step it was decided to observe March 19<sup>th</sup> as the Khilafat Day, which would be observed as a day of national mourning, betokened by fasting and hartal.

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<sup>22</sup> *CWMG* Vol. 19, p. 154

<sup>23</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.19, p. 155

<sup>24</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.19, p. 357

<sup>25</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.19, p. 358

And it was declared that if the just demands of the Muslims were not granted they would resort to Non- co operation. When Gandhi was asked: Can Hindus accept all the resolutions?" Gandhi replied that "I speak only for myself. I will co-operate whole-heartedly with the Muslim friends in the prosecution of their just demands so long as they act with sufficient restraint and so long as I feel sure that they do not wish to resort to or countenance violence".<sup>26</sup>

Gandhi laid much stress on non-violence. He made it clear that "Even if there was a single murder by any of us or at our instance, I would leave".<sup>27</sup> This from the initial stages itself created difference of opinion among Muslim leaders and Gandhi. They had no belief in non-violence as an ethical principle. They supported Gandhi only because they wanted his support and the mass influence he could command.<sup>28</sup> Gandhi was aware of the fact that most of the Muslim leaders don't have belief in non-cooperation. In one of his letter to Razmia Gandhi wrote on March 27, 1920 "My talk with Hazrat Mohani has left me much disturbed. According to him nobody believes in non-co-operation. But it has been

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<sup>26</sup> *Young India*, 10-3-1920

<sup>27</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.20, p.318

<sup>28</sup> Penderel Moon, *op. cit.*, pp.99-100

taken up merely to conciliate me”.<sup>29</sup> For most of the Muslim leaders it was only an “opportunist alliance”.<sup>30</sup>

It was decided to start non-co-operation movement on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1920 if the Khilafat question is not settled.<sup>31</sup> Later it was decided to add the Punjab wrongs also with the non-co-operation. According to Gail Minault Gandhi played up the Punjab atrocities “since his single-minded support of the Muslims’ Khilafat demands had found few echoes among his co-religionists.”<sup>32</sup>

Some of the Hindu leaders of Congress especially Malyaviya were not in support of this and he appealed Gandhi publicly and privately to suspend non-co-operation till the Congress has pronounced upon it.<sup>33</sup> But Gandhi was not ready to suspend the movement. He said that “in my humble opinion it is no congressman’s duty to consult the Congress before taking an action in a matter in which he has no doubts....For me to suspend non-co-operation would be to prove untrue to the Mussalman brethren...The Mussalman must take action now they cannot await for the congress decision. They can only expect the Congress to ratify their action

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<sup>29</sup> *CWVG*, Vol.20, p. 184

<sup>30</sup> Penderel Moon, *op. cit.*, p. 100

<sup>31</sup> *CWVG*, Vol.21, p. 5

<sup>32</sup> Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, p. 99

<sup>33</sup> *Young India*, 4-8-1920

and share their sorrows and their burden...The Khilafat is a matter of conscience with them. And in matters of conscience the Law of Majority has no place".<sup>34</sup> Gail Minault considers Gandhi's reply as a "convenient excuse".<sup>35</sup> Gandhi was aware that his Muslim allies were impatient over the pace of the movement. Gandhi was not in a position to hold off the movement.

Gandhi and Shaukat Ali started touring the country from north to south, proclaiming non-co-operation as the only remedy for Khilafat and Punjab wrongs. While the preparations were going on the Muslim religious leaders also started rallying their own forces. With the establishment of British power the position of *ulama* in the Muslim society started declining. Until then they got the greatest influence in regulating the religious life and they formed an important link between various Muslim groups. But they still remained as a politically unorganized group. When gave the call to organize the non-co-operation movement against the Khilafat wrong a major section of the *ulama* favoured accommodation with the congress.<sup>36</sup> The religious leaders played an important role in politically mobilizing the rural Muslims with

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<sup>34</sup> *Young India*, 4-8-1920

<sup>35</sup> Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, p.107

<sup>36</sup> Mushirul Hasan, 'Religion and Politics in India: The Ulama and the Khilafat Movement' in *Communal and Pan – Islamic Trends in Colonial India*, Mushirul Hasan, (ed.), Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1985, pp.19-27

their personal influence as the religious leaders. A best example for this was the Pirs of Sindh.<sup>37</sup> Through the alliance with ulama the Khilafatists opened a way to reach “the pious, still unpoliticized Muslim masses”.<sup>38</sup> As the support of the ulama were considered vital the western-educated Muslims and Gandhi sought their support and ignored repeated warnings about the obvious dangers of their involvement in politics.<sup>39</sup>

With the entry of the ulama in the movement the support of the common Muslims were guaranteed. And with the inclusion of Punjab grievances it was also made sure the support of the Congress. But the movement was not without any shortcomings. Wherever Gandhi appealed to the public he referred Swaraj as Ramraj and dharmraj and in his special appeal to the women he asked them to act like Sita. This tended to create a false feeling among the Muslims that Gandhi was advocating for Hindu raj. “Although Gandhi’s idiom was very helpful in rousing the overwhelming majority of Indian people, it would have been helpful if his allegories and parables could be mixed with those from Arabic and Persian literature too.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, p. 105

<sup>38</sup> Gail Minault, *Ibid.*, p. 110

<sup>39</sup> Mushirul Hasan, *op. cit.*, p. 31

<sup>40</sup> Sailendra Nath Ghosh, ‘Communal Harmony: Why Gandhi failed and How His Dream Shall Come True’, *Gandhi Marg*, Vol.19, no.2, p.156

The alliance with the ulama also proved disastrous to the movement as they were becoming increasingly impatient over Gandhi's policy of moderation and some of them even doubted the involvement of the Hindus in their religious issue and they even considered it as against the *Sharia*. As a final blow came Abdul Bari's warning that the Muslims were ready to desert Gandhi and adopt violent methods.<sup>41</sup> Moplah riots in August 1921 proved detrimental to the movement as some of the Hindu Congressmen felt discontent. "By the end of 1921 the Khilafat movement was slipping out of Gandhi's control and his alliance with some of its influential leaders was under severe strain. The Moplah riots along the Malabar coast of south India was the last straw and decisively weakened what little enthusiasm Hindus had for the Khilafat cause."<sup>42</sup> The fear of violence and discontent among the Hindu Congress men hold back Gandhi from the adoption of civil disobedience. Gandhi was not ready to heed to the demand of the Ulema to adopt Civil Disobedience. Soon after the outbreak of violence in Chauri-Chaura Gandhi suspended the movement. This infuriated the Muslim religious leaders. Mushirul Hasan considers "the growing strains in his alliance with the Khilafatists, and his inability to control their activities" as one of the reasons which might have

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<sup>41</sup> Mushirul Hasan, *op. cit.*, p.31

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33

influenced Gandhi to suspend the movement.<sup>43</sup> At the meetings of the Jamiyat-I-Ulama and the Central Khilafat Committee in March 1922, Gandhi was condemned for his betrayal.<sup>44</sup>

Gandhi's idea of mobilizing Muslims to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity through non-violent non-co-operation failed to keep the enthusiasm of the Muslim masses active for a long period. Nevertheless Khilafat proved to be a good opportunity to mobilize Muslim masses. With the end of it Muslim population started moving away from the Congress and National movement. One of the reason for its failure was that the Khilafat leaders accepted Gandhi's ideal of Satyagraha as a political technique and Gandhi himself created tension by making non-violence as a pre-condition of his support for the movement.<sup>45</sup> The criticism that religious issue used to mobilize the Muslim masses also not acceptable. As it was "difficult to imagine the spread of non-co-operation among the politically unsophisticated without the use of religious imagery. Though the success of the movement was limited at this stage, it did represent a pioneering

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34

<sup>45</sup> Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p.210 and Mushirul Hasan, *op. cit.*, p.32

effort in the diffusion of political awareness from urban to rural areas. As such, it was a remarkable breakthrough".<sup>46</sup>

Gandhi succeeded in mobilizing the Muslim masses but failed to control them. Once these unorganized sections were drawn in to the political activities they created their own organization in which religious leaders became dominant. Gandhi's relation to Muslims also underwent some changes as he lost the support of some of his Khilafat leaders. It was through these Muslim friends he got the support of the Muslims and alienation of these friends also resulted in the alienation of Muslims from him.

With the unhappy end the alliance that had been made with the Muslim religious leaders also came to an end. Muslims lost faith in Gandhi's movement. Some of the closest allies of Gandhi during the Khilafat movement such as Abdul Bari, S.D.Kitchlew and Zafar Ali Khan turned to communal politics.<sup>47</sup> Hindu Muslim issue became more acute than pre-1919. It was very much reflected in communal rioting. "During the years 1900 to 1922 there were 16 such riots; for the three years from

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<sup>46</sup> Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, p.132

<sup>47</sup> B.R.Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 388-89

1923 to 1926 the number was 72".<sup>48</sup> The Muslim League held its annual session separately in 1924 for the first time since 1918.<sup>49</sup>

When Gandhi came out of prison he found himself in a very embarrassing position. There was a growing distrust between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims started considering Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Shraddhanandji etc as their enemies. But Gandhi was keeping a very good relation with these leaders and moreover he in one of his article in *Young India* wrote that they were not anti-Muslims or enemies of Muslim community.<sup>50</sup> This infuriated many Muslim. They started reacting to it. One Mussalman in his letter to Gandhi wrote that "No wise man, Hindu or Mussalman, will accept your judgement that Pandit Malaviyaji is 'no enemy of Mussalmans' ...Lala Lajpat Rai stands in the same category with Pandit Malaviyaji...Let me assume that you will not advance the Hindu-Muslim problems by all inch by praising these Hindu leaders and condemning the Muslim leaders".<sup>51</sup> Gandhi's relation with these leaders often created suspicion among a section of the Muslims. Apart from this, there were several instances in which Gandhi's

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<sup>48</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru – A Biography*, Vol.1, 1889-1947, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1976, p.85

<sup>49</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi - Prisoner of Hope*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p.185

<sup>50</sup> *Young India*, 29-5-1924

<sup>51</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.28, p.145, *Young India*, 12-6-1924

statements were often mis-reported. For example The Hindu (12<sup>th</sup> June, 1924) reported of having said ‘every Mussalman as a vagabond.’<sup>52</sup>

In order to win the confidence of Muslims Gandhi wanted Congress to elect Ansari as the President of the Congress. And at the same time he confessed that he would give his vote to Sarojini Naidu.<sup>53</sup>

The communal riot at Kohat deeply hurt Gandhi. He decided to observe a 21 days fast from 18<sup>th</sup> September 1924 onwards at the house of Maulana Mohammed Ali as a penance for the sins of Hindus and Muslims.<sup>54</sup> He made it clear that “The fast is not born out of ill-will against any such interpretation. It is in the fitness of things that this fast should be taken up and completed in a Mussalman house”.<sup>55</sup> Even though the emotional impact of the fast was great practically it solved nothing.<sup>56</sup>

In between, some of the statements made by Gandhi, which is related to Koran, created doubt among Muslims about his intention. Gandhi reacted to the punishment of Stoning to Death when he got the report about this punishment inflicted upon two members of the Ahmediya Sect. He said: “...as a human being living in the fear of God I

<sup>52</sup> *Young India*, 26-6-1924, *CWMG*, Vol. 28, p. 215-16

<sup>53</sup> *Young India*, 17-7-1924

<sup>54</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.29, p.180

<sup>55</sup> *Young India*, 25-9-1924, *CWMG*, Vol.29, p.212

<sup>56</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi - Prisoner...*, p.188

should question the morality of the method under any circumstance whatsoever. What ever may have been necessary or permissible during the Prophet's lifetime and in that age, this particular form of penalty cannot be defended on the mere ground of its mention in the Koran. Every formula of every religion has in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent. Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world".<sup>57</sup> Muslim leaders reacted sharply to Gandhi's statement. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, the President of the Punjab Khilafat Committee wrote to Gandhi "...by challenging the right of the Koran to regulate the life of its followers in its own way you have shaken the belief of millions of your Muslim admirers in your capacity to lead them...to hold that even if the Koran supported such form of penalty, it should be condemned outright as an error, is a form of reasoning which cannot appeal to the Mussalmans".<sup>58</sup> Gandhi replied Maulana that "The Maulana has betrayed intolerance of criticism by a non-Muslim of anything relating to Islam"<sup>59</sup>. Mahomed Ali, President, Ahmadiya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islam wrote to Gandhi "The Koran enjoins no such punishment as stoning for any

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<sup>57</sup> *Young India*, 26-2-1925

<sup>58</sup> *Young India*, 5-3-1925

<sup>59</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 30, p. 337

offence whatever. Your note is unfair to Islam and her prophet and liable to tremendously prejudice the world against Islam”.<sup>60</sup>

Gandhi became aware of the fact that it was difficult to find a solution for the Hindu-Muslim problem. In one of his speech at Public meeting, Madras on March 7, 1925, he said: “It has become a hopeless tangle at the present moment.....for the time being I have put away in my cupboard this Hindu-Muslim tangle. But I must confess to you today that I cannot present a workable solution you will accept.”<sup>61</sup> Later in a speech at Karadi on April 15, 1925, Gandhi remarked that “If I sit down to sum up [the position] in India, Muslims are more to be blamed than Hindus....I cannot disown Muslims even if they harass Hindus for no fault of their’s. I shall try to please them. I shall go on telling them that what they are doing is *adharma* and not Islam...There is none today listen to this advice of mine.”<sup>62</sup>

Gandhi’s changed position on Hindu-Muslim tangle was very clear when he said that: “I gave all the help that I could for the Khilafat, because I want to enlist the Mussalman’s sympathy in the matter of cow-

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<sup>60</sup> *Young India*, 12-3-1925

<sup>61</sup> *The Hindu*, 9-3-1925

<sup>62</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.31, pp. 160-161

protection”.<sup>63</sup> Even though he claimed that “Let no one imagine that the differences between Maulana Shaukat Ali and myself about Kohat have put any strain what so ever upon our relations”,<sup>64</sup> his relation with Ali Brothers also undergone drastic change. Ali Brothers also stopped accompanying Gandhi. Later Gandhi accepted that “...I know that I have not the Ali Brothers with me. Maulana Shaukat Ali will no longer have me in his pocket.”<sup>65</sup> Whatever unity he had forged with the Muslim leaders during the Khilafat came to an end by the end of 1925.

Publication of Nehru Report made this very clear. It led to a definite cleavage between Hindus and Muslims.<sup>66</sup>

The difference of opinion started coming out during the All-Parties Conference at Bombay in May 1928. To overcome the deadlock Gandhi had suggested the formation of a committee to draft the constitution. There was difference of opinion regarding the members of the committee also. Four names suggested were Ansari, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Aney. Sarojini Naidu and Shaukat Ali proposed Shauib's name. Gandhi accepted their suggestion and included Subhas

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213

<sup>64</sup> *Young India*, 28-5-1925

<sup>65</sup> *Jayakar Papers*, F.No.354 (press clippings), NAI, p. 117

<sup>66</sup> *The Indian Daily Mail*, April 25, 1930, p.119

Bose also. Shaukat Ali wanted Shuaib in the committee to represent the Muslim demand of reservation of seats because the other members Ansari, Motilal, Jawaharlal and Aney did not want Muslim reservation of seats. But to Shaukat's surprise, at the open meeting of the All-Parties Conference, other names were also added to the committee, i.e., Ali Imam, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jayakar, Joshi, and Sardar Mangal Singh. Shaukat Ali believed that Shuaib alone and possibly Subhas Bose were the only members who could put forward the Muslim point of view, and the views of others were against the reservation of seats.<sup>67</sup> Shaukat Ali made it clear that "My quarrel really is not with Ansari but with Pandit Motilal, who knowing that I was giving expression to the views of millions of Mussalmans yet would not listen..."<sup>68</sup>

Gandhi was not ready to agree with the Muslim claim that the Nehru Report has disregarded Mussalman interest. In one of his letters to a Mussalman he wrote that "...I am convinced that there has been no desire on the part of the framers of that Report to belittle or ignore the Mussalman claim."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Extracts from Shaukat Ali's letter to Gandhi, dated October 23, 1928, S.N. No. 13710, NAI and *CWMG*, Vol.43, pp.524-526.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.526

<sup>69</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.45, pp.54-55

Gandhi made it clear after his meeting with Jinnah in Delhi “although changes may be made in it, with the approval of the people when the time comes, for the present and for this year this Report should, from the people’s point of view, be considered a final and definite demand and wherever it is accepted it should be done unconditionally.”<sup>70</sup> There was much pressure on Gandhi from some of the Hindu leaders not to alter the Nehru Report and Jayakar warned him “that any attempt at this time to vary the solution of the Hindu-Muslim question adopted in the Nehru Committee Report is fraught with far reaching consequences”.<sup>71</sup> He told Gandhi that Mohammedans were divided into four well known groups. Three of them were against joint electorates at any price. It was therefore not clear on whose behalf Jinnah spoke and what bulk of the entire Mohammedan community would be placated if his demands were conceded”.<sup>72</sup>

In March 1929 Muslims in the Legislative Assembly made it clear that they did not accept the Nehru Report.<sup>73</sup> Jinnah drafted a fourteen point resolution to unite the various blocs of Muslim politicians. But he failed in this task.

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.108

<sup>71</sup> *Jayakar Papers*, F.No.407, part I, NAI

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>73</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience-The Mahatma in Indian Politics 1928-34*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1977, p.47

Whatever hope was left in making the Muslim leaders to accept the Report was came to an end with the stand taken by some of the Hindu leaders. Ansari in complete despair wrote to Gandhi “Pt. Motilal’s cold reception to Mr. Jinnah, whom I had succeeded after a great deal of effort in persuading to come and see Panditji at his house, was also a great disappointment. After that the communalist Mussalmans got the chance and the Muslim attitude hardened [as] shown by the absurd resolution at the All India Parties’ Muslim Conference<sup>74</sup> at Delhi and subsequently by fourteen points of Mr. Jinnah.”<sup>75</sup>

Although Jinnah’s 14 points failed in uniting various blocs of Muslim Politicians “...its similarity to the resolutions of the All Parties Muslim Conference in Delhi in January showed the trend of Muslim political opinion away from agreement with congress”.<sup>76</sup> The All Parties Muslim Conference under the presidency of Aga Khan continued its existence and represented the Muslim demands in the subsequent months demonstrated the split with the Congress and a new unity among Muslim politicians was in marked contrast to their disunity during the 1920s.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> An ad-hoc body which emerged in reaction to Nehru Report.

<sup>75</sup> Letter to Gandhi from Dr. M.A. Ansari dated 13/12/1930, *CWMG*, Vol. 48, p.525

<sup>76</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi and Civil...*, p.47

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

The launching of Civil Disobedience by Gandhi had aggravated the situation Ansari warned Gandhi “You are taking a great responsibility on yourself by declaring war against the Government today. The situation today is quite the reverse of what it was in 1920, when you started the campaign of non-co-operation.”<sup>78</sup> In the comparative table prepared by Ansari it was showed that ‘in 1920 – Highest watermark reached in Hindu-Muslim unity and in 1930 – Lowest water-mark reached in Hindu-Muslim unity.’<sup>79</sup>

In the meanwhile, there started numerous misrepresentations about Gandhi in the Muslim Press. It was spread that Gandhi prevented Imam Saheb, an inmate of the Ashram in joining the Ashram group of civil resisters. Gandhi made it clear that “Imam is not joining the march as he is too weak to undertake the exertion” and that “two Mussalmans are actually enlisted for the march” and “the present plan of campaign is so designed as ultimately to dispel all suspicion”.<sup>80</sup> It was reported that Maulana Shaukat Ali remarked that the independence movement is for Hinduraj and against Mussalmans and therefore the Mussalman should

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<sup>78</sup> Letter from M.A. Ansari to Gandhi dated February 13, 1930, *CWMG*, vol.48, p.526

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.527

<sup>80</sup> *Young India*, dated 12-3-1930

leave it alone.<sup>81</sup> As a reaction to Muslim friends complaint that he did not pass through their villages Gandhi decided to commence the Satyagraha from a Muslim friend's house in Dandi.<sup>82</sup>

Muslims generally kept themselves aloof from the march. They feared that "if the principles of Nehru Report are to be adopted in framing the future constitution of India its interests would be adversely affected. Whether this fear is justifiable or not the fact remains that it is there."<sup>83</sup> They also believed that Gandhi will call off the campaign if Britain agrees to accept the Nehru Report and grant Dominion Status.<sup>84</sup> Gandhi himself said that "The fact that those taking part in the movement are preponderatingly Hindus is unfortunately true. By proclaiming a boycott the Maulana is helping the process."<sup>85</sup>

According to Judith Brown, "In contrast to non-co-operation Muslim participation was paltry, except on the Frontier,.....In Muslim majority areas such as Bengal and Punjab civil disobedience was much

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *The Bombay Chronicle*, 26-3-1930

<sup>83</sup> *Jayakar Papers*, F. No. 354, Press Clippings, *The Indian Daily Mail*, dated April 25, 1930, NAI.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Young India*, 12-3-1930

weakened by Muslim abstention and in all just over 1,000 Muslims in gaol in mid-November, out of a total of 29,000 prisoners".<sup>86</sup>

But still Gandhi was optimistic of bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity. While delivering a speech at Council of All-India Muslim League, Delhi, he expressed his fear that "Today you may not accept that position of mine but my early upbringing, my childhood and youth, has been to strive for Hindu-Muslim unity. No one may dismiss it today as merely a craze of my old age" and he assured them that if congress participate in the Round Table Conference and "if there is a settlement between the Government and the congress, the question of Hindu-Muslim unity will be one which will engage our first attention."<sup>87</sup>

Gandhi wanted to reach an agreement with the Mussalmans before going to attend the Round Table Conference so that he could represent a truly national party. He said that "without that unity our going to the Conference will be of no avail. No one will pretend that the conference can help us to achieve unity".<sup>88</sup> He even told Hindus to make voluntary surrender. But he had to go to London without a communal settlement. His hands were tied by the views of congress's own small group of

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<sup>86</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi – Prisoner...*, pp.242-43

<sup>87</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, dated 25-2-1931

<sup>88</sup> *Young India*, dated 12-3-1931

Muslim supporters; in the end his attempts to achieve a new unity collapsed on the question of separate electorate.<sup>89</sup>

In his speech at Federal Structure Committee on September 15, 1931, he gave account of the functioning of the Congress and about the leaders who presided the annual sessions through which he tried to show the representative character of the Congress. At the beginning of the speech itself he accepted his limitation. "I am obliged to make these remarks because I know that there are fundamental differences of opinion between the Government and the Congress, and it is possible that there are vital differences between my colleagues and myself."<sup>90</sup>

Gandhi tried a lot to include Ansari also a part of Congress delegation to Round Table Conference. But his conversations with the Muslim Delegation in London failed. In his press statement he said: "I have felt the absence of Ansari a severe handicap, but he will be of no real use unless The Muslim Delegation desires or approves of his selection as a delegate".<sup>91</sup> Gandhi was convinced that unity was impossible. He accepted that he was not the leader of a united India.<sup>92</sup> Difference of

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<sup>89</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi- Prisoner...*, p.254

<sup>90</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 53, p.359

<sup>91</sup> *The Hindu* dated 15-10-1931, *CWMG* Vol.54, p.7

<sup>92</sup> *Young India* dated 5-11-1931, *CWMG* Vol.54, p.67

opinion among the Indian delegates gave Britishers an opportunity to award separate constituencies to all the minorities.

Second Round Table Conference made it clear that unity was not possible at all. Muslim opinion could never be in agreement with the Congress.

In subsequent years many Muslims began to reorganize under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. League became more powerful under his leadership. The League rejected the Government of India Act, 1935. When Congress Governments formed after the 1937 elections, League under Jinnah started intensive political activity against the Congress. They started accusing Congress for being hostile to the Muslim interests and of favouring Hindus. Jinnah, in his speech, on October 15, 1937 at Lucknow said: "The present leadership of Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Muslims of India more and more by pursuing the policy, which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed the government in six provinces where they are in a majority they have by their words, deeds and programme

shown more and more that the Muussalmans cannot expect any justice or fairplay at their hands.”<sup>93</sup>

The Calcutta session of the Muslim League passed a resolution on the communal riots which had taken place in U.P., Bihar, C.P, Bombay and other provinces: “In the opinion of the League the Congress governments have signally failed to discharge their primary duty of protecting the Muslim minorities in their provinces and it declares that if immediate steps are not taken to protect the Muslims by the Congress governments the consequences to the country as a whole will be disastrous.”<sup>94</sup>

The Congress Muslim mass contact programme really annoyed the Muslim League leaders especially Jinnah. He remarked: “The Congress attempt under the guise of establishing mass contact with the Mussalmans is calculated to divide and weaken and break the Mussalmans and is an effort to detach them from their accredited leaders.”<sup>95</sup>

Jinnah made his position clear when he declared in his speech at Lucknow that “it is no having complete independence on your lips and the

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<sup>93</sup> *A.I.C.C. Files No. B. 6 to 10 / 1938, NMML.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *CWVG Vol.72 p.493*

Government of India Act, 1935 in your hands".<sup>96</sup> As a reply to Jinnah's speech Gandhi wrote a letter to Jinnah on October 19, 1937 "...the whole of your speech is a declaration of war. Only I had hoped you would reserve poor me as bridge between the two. I see that you want no bridge."<sup>97</sup> Jinnah replied that "I am sorry you think my speech at Lucknow is a declaration of war. It is purely in self defence....As to reserving you as a "bridge" and peace-maker", don't you think your complete silence for all these months has identified you with the Congress leadership although I know that you are not even a four-anna member of that body?"<sup>98</sup>

Gandhi's changed attitude during late 1930s irritated Jinnah very much. When Jinnah expressed his desire to have a talk with Gandhi before his discussion with the Congress President. Gandhi told Jinnah that "so far as I am concerned, just as on the Hindu-Muslim question I was guided by Dr. Ansari, now that he is no more in our midst, I have accepted Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as my guide. My suggestion, therefore, to you is that conversation should be opened in the first instance as between you and Maulana Saheb. But in every case regard me as at

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<sup>96</sup> *The Indian Annual Register*, 1937 Vol.11, pp.403-5. *CWMG*, Vol.72, p.492

<sup>97</sup> *CWMG* Vol.72, p.353

<sup>98</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, 16-6-1938. *CWMG* Vol.72, p.494

your disposal".<sup>99</sup> This really annoyed Jinnah. He expressed his dissatisfaction in his reply to Gandhi on March 3, 1938, "... I find that there is no change in your attitude and mentality when you say you would be guided Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as Dr. Ansari is no more. If you pursue this line you will be repeating the same tragedy as you did when you expressed your helplessness because Dr. Ansari, holding pronounced and die-hard views, did not agree and you had to say that although you were willing, but what could you do? This happened, as you know, before you went to the Round Table Conference". He asked Gandhi to recognize the All-India Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organization of the Mussalmans of India. He said that, "It is only on that basis that we can proceed further and devise machinery of approach."<sup>100</sup> Gandhi expressed his helplessness in his reply dated on March 8, 1938, "You expect me to be able to speak on behalf of 'the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country.' I am afraid I cannot fulfill the test. I cannot represent either the Congress or the Hindus in the sense you mean. But I would exert to the utmost all the moral influence I could have with them in order to secure an honourable settlement."<sup>101</sup> Gandhi was ready to go to Bombay to meet Jinnah and Jinnah agreed to meet him in

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<sup>99</sup> CWMG, Vol.73, p.5. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16-6-1938

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p.454

Bombay.<sup>102</sup> But Jinnah declined the suggestion made by Gandhi of Maulana Azad accompanying him and made it clear that he would prefer to see him alone.<sup>103</sup>

The Muslim mass contact programme or talks with Jinnah could not solve the problem. Congress almost lost the support of the Muslim masses by 1940. Gandhi in his speech at Subjects Committee on March 18, 1940 said that: "There was a time when there was not a Muslim whose confidence I did not enjoy. Today I have forfeited that confidence and most of the Urdu Press pours abuse on me."<sup>104</sup>

Muslims were not at all enthusiastic when Gandhi gave the call for Quit India Movement. The complete alienation of Muslims reflected in this movement. It was partly because of the Muslim League's prohibition on taking on any part in the movement. The Muslims as a community, kept completely aloof from the disturbances and were, in fact, actively helpful to the authorities in some areas.<sup>105</sup> And because of this "no communal clashes took place."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106

<sup>104</sup> *CWVG*, Vol.78, p.73, *Harijan*, 30-3-1940

<sup>105</sup> *Home Political*, (I) F. No. 3/34/42, NAI.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Government of Bihar reported that “Muhammadans in the lump held aloof from the disturbances, though this was not by any means universal. Educated Muslims generally did not participate and the influence of the Muslim League probably governed their attitude. But in some areas the lower classes of Muhammadans certainly did participate and both in Patna and Bhagalpur districts Muhammadan goondas were prominent in several places. In Tirhut on the other hand there were fairly numerous cases of Muhammadans co operation with the authorities.”<sup>107</sup>

Muslim League intensified its anti-Congress propaganda after 1939. The Lahore session of the All India Muslim League in 1940 declared its demand for Pakistan. In 1942 Cripps Mission accepted the autonomy of Muslim majority provinces.<sup>108</sup>

In subsequent years Muslim League intensified its propaganda for Pakistan and was never ready to go back from it. It had become very clear during Gandhi-Jinnah talks in 1944. Even though Jinnah expressed his dislike ness over Gandhi’s argument that he had come to meet Jinnah in his individual capacity and not as a representative of Congress<sup>109</sup> he agreed to discuss the Hindu-Muslim question with Gandhi. But Jinnah

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al, *India’s Struggle For Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989, p. 493

<sup>109</sup> Talk with M.A. Jinnah , September 9,1944, *CWMG*, Vol.84, p.369

made it clear that he wanted Pakistan before independence but Gandhi was not ready to agree with that.<sup>110</sup>

There were difference of opinion between them on every issues they discussed. When Jinnah asked Gandhi "...does it (independence) mean on the basis of a United India?"<sup>111</sup> Gandhi replied that "Independence does mean as envisaged in the A.I.C.C. Resolution of 1942. But it cannot be on the basis of a united India. If we come to a settlement, it would be on the basis of the settlement, assuming of course, that it accrues general acceptance in the country. The process will be somewhat like this. We reach by joint effort independence for India as it stands. India becoming free will proceed to demarcation, plebiscite and partition if the people concerned vote for partition. All this is implied in the Rajaji Formula."<sup>112</sup>

Jinnah wanted Gandhi to accept that he represented Hindu India and told him that "...when you proceed to say that you aspire to represent all the inhabitants of India, I regret I cannot accept that statement of yours. It is quite clear that you represent nobody else but the Hindus and

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<sup>110</sup> *CWMG* vol. p.370

<sup>111</sup> Letter from M.A. Jinnah to Gandhi dated September 14,1944, *CWMG*, Vol.84, p.465

<sup>112</sup> Letter to M.A. Jinnah dated September 15,1944, *Ibid*, p.384

as long as you do not realize your true position and the realities, it is very difficult for me to argue with you...”<sup>113</sup>

Gandhi accepting the self-determination of Muslim majority provinces and asked Jinnah “Can we not agree to differ on the question of “two nation” and yet solve the problem on the basis of self-determination? It is this basis that has brought me to you. If the regions holding Muslim majorities have to be separated according to the Lahore Resolution, the grave step of separation should be specifically placed before and approved by the people in that area.”<sup>114</sup> Jinnah replied him that “Ours is a case of division and carving out two independent sovereign States by way of settlement between two major nations, Hindus and Muslims, and not of severance or secession from any existing union, which is non-existent in India. The right of self-determination which we claim postulates that we are a nation, and as such it would be the self-determination of the Mussalmans, and they alone are entitled to exercise that right.”<sup>115</sup>

A break was expected form initial stages of Gandhi-Jinnah talks. As expected they failed in reaching a mutual settlement. Gandhi made it clear

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<sup>113</sup> Letter from M.A. Jinnah to Gandhi dated September 17, 1944, *Ibid*, p.469

<sup>114</sup> Letter to M.A. Jinnah dated September 19, 1944, *Ibid*, p.471

<sup>115</sup> Letter from M.A. Jinnah dated September 21, 1944, *Ibid*, p.471

that “ I cannot accept the Lahore Resolution as you want me to...”<sup>116</sup> Jinnah also wrote to Gandhi that “if a break comes, it will be because you have not satisfied me in regard to the essence of the claim embodied in the Lahore Resolution”.<sup>117</sup> And in his statement said that “I regret to say that I have failed in my task of converting Mr. Gandhi”.<sup>118</sup> With the break up of Gandhi – Jinnah Talks of 1944 the final attempt to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem got a set back.

By 1945 Gandhi started moving away from Congress when he felt that his words carry not much weight among his colleagues. By the time the popular support for Pakistan also got momentum. It really reflected in the 1946 elections. In contrast to 1937 election Muslim League got 439 out of 494 Muslim seats in the Legislatures, and had large majorities in Bengal and Punjab, the Muslim majority areas where previously it had been so weak. And not it could legitimately claim to represent India’s Muslims.<sup>119</sup> By the end of 1946 Congress accepted the grouping of provinces as envisaged in the Cabinet Mission Plan.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Letter to Jinnah September 26, 1944, *Ibid.*, p.413

<sup>117</sup> Letter from M.A. Jinnah dated September 26, 1944, *Ibid.*, p.477

<sup>118</sup> M.A. Jinnah’s Statement, *Ibid.*, p.478

<sup>119</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi-Prisoner...*, p.365

<sup>120</sup> Bipan Chandra and et. al., *op. cit.*, p.501

After the 1946 election Viceroy invited Congress to form the interim government. Later Muslim League also joined the interim government. But they declined to join the Constituent Assembly. When the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee declared the decision to transfer of power to Indians before June 1948 Muslim League tried to disrupt the Congress ministries and intensified its struggle to achieve Pakistan. More over Jinnah's call to observe August 16, 1946 as Direct Action Day "unleashed communal violence and a train of retaliation which even a joint appeal for peace by Gandhi and Jinnah in April 1947 could not control."<sup>121</sup> Communal violence and Lord Mountbatten's talks with the leaders of Congress and League made it clear that partition of India was inevitable.

Gandhi's disillusionment over the decisions of Congress and his helplessness became very clear when he said that "whatever the Congress decides will be done; nothing will be according to what I say. Mr writ runs no more. If it did the tragedies in the Punjab, Bihar and Noakhali would have happened. No one listen to me any more. I am a small man. True there was a time when mine was a big voice. Then everyone obeyed what I said; now neither the Congress nor the Hindus nor the Muslims

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<sup>121</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi – Prisoner ...*, p.374

listen to me. Where is the Congress today? It is disintegrating. I am crying in the wilderness.”<sup>122</sup>

In June 1947 Congress accepted partition of India.<sup>123</sup> Gandhi said that though he did not agree with the decisions of the Working Committee regarding the division of India, he did not want to take any step which would stand in the way of the Working Committee in implementing its decision.<sup>124</sup>

Thus all his attempts to find a solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem and befriending Muslims came to a tragic end with the Partition and the communal violence erupted before and after the partition.

Gandhi tried to mobilize Muslims through some of his dearest Muslim friends. He depended on different persons at various stages. He was completely successful in mobilizing them in the first stage with the help of Ali Brothers. But things began to change with the withdrawal of the Non-Co-operation - Khilafat Movement and with the alienation of Ali Brothers. When Ali Brothers started moving away from him he depended on Dr. M.A. Ansari to keep a good understanding with the Muslims. But

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<sup>122</sup> Speech at Prayer Meeting, April 1, 1947, *CWVG*, Vol.94, pp. 216-217

<sup>123</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's Letter to Viceroy dated June 2, 1947, *CWVG*, Vol.95, p.416

<sup>124</sup> Speech at Congress Working Committee Meeting, June 2, 1947, *CWVG*, Vol. 95, p.192

due to the indifferent stand taken by some of his colleagues especially Hindu nationalists spoiled the attempts made by Ansari and Gandhi to keep them under their leadership. Ansari did not enjoy much support among the Muslim League leaders. With the death of Ansari he turned towards Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. But “Azad was hardly of the all-India standing to perform this function, as an educated Bengali without a regional base or a solid organizational backing in his community.”<sup>125</sup>

The success of Gandhi’s mobilization of Muslims depended much more on the issues he had chosen. Khilafat issue was one such which gave him a direct link to Muslim problem. But after that there was not any such issue which could draw Muslims to the forefront. Muslim participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was not prominent and it was much more less in the Quit India Movement.

With the entrance of Jinnah as the leader of Muslim League in the second half of 1930 made it almost impossible for Congress leadership to win over the support of the Muslims for the national cause. The poor performance of the Muslim League candidates in the 1937 election really alarmed Jinnah and it became almost impossible to conciliate him. Moreover the policy of the British Government also helped him. “At

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<sup>125</sup> Judith Brown, *Gandhi – Prisoner...*, p.295

every critical moment after the resignation of ministries in September, 1939, Jinnah's great asset was the government's readiness to negotiate with him as an ally rather than as an adversary. The Quit India movement (August 1942) turned out to be yet another milestone".<sup>126</sup> The British government looking for an ally during the war years never wanted to irritate Jinnah. This placed Jinnah in favourable position.

Gandhi also found it very difficult to negotiate with Jinnah, who was not ready to make any adjustments. And there was not a single Muslim leader in Congress who could draw the support of large number of Muslims for the national cause. Gandhi with the lack of support from his own colleagues in the Congress and the absence of a strong Muslim leader whom he can depend to have a good relation with the Muslim masses failed in keeping the Muslims under his leadership.

#### **B) GANDHI AND DALITS:**

Harijan<sup>127</sup> upliftment movement was an important part in the constructive programme. Even though Gandhi treated it in a religious

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<sup>126</sup> Mushirul Hasan, 'Partition Narratives – Part 1', in *The Radical Humanist*, March 2002, p.7

<sup>127</sup> Some of the readers of *Navajivan* suggested Gandhi to use the word Harijan as a substitute for the word *Antyaja* (last born). The word Harijana was first used by a Gujarati poet which means 'men of god' who are abandoned by society.

manner it widened the mass base of the movement. It was started to eradicate the evil of untouchability but it in an indirect way helped the national movement. Most of the movements which started and confined locally provided an atmosphere which was conducive for the ongoing national movement. It helped to mobilize the masses who were till then kept aloof from the political activities. Later it helped in generating a spirit among these untouchables to organize themselves.

The old Indian social organization was based on the *Varnas*. Religious, economic, political and social life of the individual was determined by the *Varna* in which he was born. His or her rights and duties were determined by the very birth in a particular *Varna*. This system put the Brahman at the top and the Shudras at the lowest strata of the social organization.

There is a clear difference between the *Varna* and the caste. *Varna* refers to the 'colour' and consequently to the duties assigned to the persons born in their respective *Varnas*. Caste refers to profession which a person adopts. Thus there may be many professions in the same *Varna*. In the beginning, persons adopted different professions on the basis of their own choice-physical fitness and mental aptitude-but for long it remained confined to their own *Varnas*.

Gandhi firmly believed in the *Varnadharmā* and never doubted its utility. “For me *Varnashrama* does not mean a graded system of untouchability..... it does not mean to me grades at all. It is not a vertical division. It is a horizontal one. In my view, all Varnas stand absolutely on the same plane, i.e., of equality. Hence there can be no question of untouchability. *Varnadharmā* is a mighty economic law which, if we subscribe to it, would save us from the catastrophe that is in store for the world. I have sufficient warrant in Hindu scriptures for saying the Brahmins and scavengers are absolutely on a par in the eyes of God.”<sup>128</sup>

In India, even during the modern period also, caste system played a very important role in the social set up. The caste-Hindus had certain privileges which were denied to the lower castes of the society. Later on a fifth group named “*Namasudras*” were added to the already existing division. They were even lower in social scale than the *sudras*. They were also called “*Panchamas*” or pariahs. As these people were very much lower than even the *sudra*, they were called untouchables. They were required to do the “unclean” work, such as sweeping, scavenging. In some parts of South India, even the shadow of those untouchables was regarded

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<sup>128</sup>*CWVG*, vol. 62, pp. 294- 295

as pollution.<sup>129</sup> In rural as well as in urban areas also the conditions of the untouchables were same. The rural population who went to the urban areas absorbed almost entirely in ill-paid, menial service jobs or in work connected with handling leather, in keeping with their traditional 'low' or 'impure' occupations, and alternative avenues of employment for them were virtually non-existent. The untouchables also had a very little opportunity to enter educational institutions, both because they were unable to afford the expense and because these institutions were usually unwilling to accept untouchable students. Being mostly illiterate, they were seldom employed in the lower government services in clerical posts. Before 1934, they were not recruited to the subordinate ranks of the police force.<sup>130</sup>

Occupational divisions along caste lines, prevalent in the rural situation, were thus being replicated in urban area, notwithstanding the direct cast-domination in employment relations. Occupational distinctions

<sup>129</sup> The disabilities which the Depressed Classes suffered with regard to the use of amenities such as wells, roads and temples or status symbols such as dress and ornaments were generally more severe in Madras Presidency than elsewhere. Andre Beteille, 'Caste and Political Group Formation in Tamilnad' in Rajani Kothari (ed.) *Caste in Indian Politics*, Orient Longman Limited, New Delhi, 1970, p.285. In Malabar there were not only untouchable castes, there were 'unseeable' ones as well. Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India - Malabar, 1900-1948*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.2.

<sup>130</sup> Nandini Goptu, 'Caste and Labour: Untouchable Social Movements in Urban Uttar Pradesh in the Early Twentieth Century', in Peter Robb, (ed.), *Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p.280

were coupled with spatial segregation of the untouchables in terms of residential settlement patterns. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, therefore, the untouchable migrants to the towns were exposed to two contrary trends. On the one hand, caste-domination ceased, to a large extent, to be a feature of occupational relations. It would be reasonable to surmise that this was also likely to have created expectations and aspirations for economic advancement, improved living conditions, and education. On the other hand, continued caste-distinctions in employment or educational opportunities and settlement patterns, as well as their general poverty, thwarted economic or social improvement among untouchables.<sup>131</sup>

Untouchability is a notion of defilement, contempt and hatred towards a section of people called untouchables. It was, however, imposed on them by all cunning and coercion. It survived because it formed part of practices of Hinduism. As a mental attitude it was manifested through several acts which include (i) prevention from entering any place of public worship; (ii) enforcement of disability with regard to access to watering place, public charitable institutions, public conveyance and such other places; (iii) restriction to use of jewellery and

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281

finery; (iv) refusal to admit to hospitals, educational institutions and public employment; (v) discriminations to the prejudice of untouchables at public and private places and institutions; (vi) compulsion to perform menial and low status services such as scavenging, etc; and (vii) boycott or perpetration of atrocities on the untouchables as a reprisal or revenge for having attempted to exercise their legitimate rights.<sup>132</sup>

Untouchability is considered as an integral part of Hindu religion which had the sanction of Hindu traditions. 'According to Hindu religion as traditionally practiced, communities such as *Dhed*, *Bhangi* etc., known by the names of *Antyaj*, *Pancham* and *Achhut* and so on, are looked upon as untouchable. Hindus belonging to other communities believe that they will be defiled if they touch a member of any of the said communities and, if anyone does so accidentally, he thinks that has committed a sin.'<sup>133</sup>

Gandhi gave equal importance to the constructive programme along with the national movement.<sup>134</sup> Constructive work played an important

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<sup>132</sup> R.K. Kshirsagar, *Dalit Movement In India And Its Leaders (1857-1956)*, M.D Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, P. 29

<sup>133</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.14, p.456

<sup>134</sup> A *strategist* of Swaraj as Gandhi was, he had "evolved and kept before the Congress and the nation a double programme, one for active and revolutionary periods when the tempo of political life is on the rise, and the other for comparatively peaceful times when the national life is sluggish and normal" J.B. Kripalani quoted in K.C. Mahendru, *Gandhi and the Congress Socialist Party - 1934-48*, ABS Publications, Jalandhar, 1986, p.107. Constructive Programme was also Gandhi's'

role in the Gandhian strategy. It was primarily organized around the promotion of Khadi, spinning, and village industries, national education and Hindu-Muslim unity, struggle against untouchability and social uplift of the Dalits, and boycott of foreign cloth and liquor.<sup>135</sup> Removal of untouchability was predominant among his constructive programme. It was during his childhood days itself that he became aware of the curse of untouchability. In his words: "I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This idea was not brought home to me by my bitter experiences during S [outh] African struggle. It is not due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think –as some people do– that I have taken my views from my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back as time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible."<sup>136</sup>

It is very difficult to find out the origin of untouchability. Even though most of the Pandits are of the opinion that it has the sanction of Vedas Gandhi was not in a position to accept this view. He said that "If it

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"full substitute for armed revolt", as well even for civil disobedience. *Ibid.* 106, "Civil Disobedience is not absolutely necessary to win freedom through purely non-violent effort, if the cooperation the whole nation is secured in the Constructive Programme" Gandhi quoted in *Ibid.*, p.106

<sup>135</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement: The Long Term Dynamics*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1993 (Reprint), p. 37

<sup>136</sup> *CWMG, Vol. 23*, p. 42

was proved to me that this is an essential part of Hinduism. I for one would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself.”<sup>137</sup> His struggle was only against the practice of untouchability and not against the removal of caste system. “Caste I consider a useful institution if properly regulated. Untouchability is a crime against God and humanity. I would purify the former, I would destroy the latter”.<sup>138</sup> He desired the caste system to remain in the original form that is having only four divisions which is based on occupation. What he criticized and stood against was the modern caste system which has a fifth division of untouchables. In his view the division of caste was completely based upon occupation and there was no room for high and lowness. According to him in Hindu *shastras* and Vedas equal respect was given to each caste of Hindu society. So there was nothing wrong in following Varna or caste system in its original form. But he never included inter-dining and inter-marriage as essential criteria in the removal of untouchability. In his conclusion “Varna is wrongly understood today..... Untouchability must go, and Varnas should have nothing to do with interdining or intermarriage”.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *CWVG, Vol. 14, p. 429*

<sup>138</sup> *CWVG, Vol. 20, p.358*

<sup>139</sup> *CWVG, Vol. 50, (1972 edition), p.228*

According to T.K. Ravindran:

“Approval of caste system and disapproval of untouchability at the same time were necessarily a political expediency as far as Gandhi and Congress were concerned. They wanted the depressed classes and outcastes to remain within the fold of Hinduism along with caste-Hindus. Without the support of the lower castes, who were in the majority compared with all other upper caste groups in India, the nationalist movement would have remained mainly a caste-Hindu phenomenon. In order to win them over, Congress had to espouse their cause. The easiest means to do that was to take up the programme of removal of untouchability. But the leadership of the congress and its membership largely, rested on caste-Hindus. It will be highly inexpedient, therefore, to advocate eradication of caste itself; Gandhi well recognized this fact when he broke away from other reformers, by declaring his firm faith in caste and his opposition to interdining and inter-marriage, which he did not think desirable even as a matter of individual freedom”.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> T.K. Ravindran, *Vaikkam Satyagraha and Gandhi*, Sri Narayana Institute of Social and Cultural Development, Trichur, 1975, pp.14-15

Later, when Gandhi came to the forefront of the Indian National Movement he gave equal importance to anti-untouchability campaign along with Hindu-Muslim unity. The resolution on non-violent non-cooperation had in its programme campaign against untouchability: All should try to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity and likewise, end the bitterness prevailing among the various sections in the country. The quarrels between Brahmins and non-Brahmins should be ended, the sin of untouchability eradicated.<sup>141</sup>

Gandhi considered untouchability as an obstacle in the way of the attainment of *Swaraj*. So it should be removed from the Hindu society in order to attain, *Swaraj*. So long as the Hindus willfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, *Swaraj* is impossible of attainment.<sup>142</sup> We can be called true *Swarajists* only if we do *tapascharya*<sup>143</sup> to get pure *Swaraj* which will provide cool shelter to all.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *CWGMG, Vol. 22, p.191*

<sup>142</sup> *CWGMG, Vol. 23, p.44*

<sup>143</sup> self-suffering as moral discipline

<sup>144</sup> *CWGMG, Vol. 23, p. 57*

In his opinion Indians don't have right to lead a movement against British Raj for *Swaraj* unless they were free from the evil of untouchability. "Swaraj is as inconceivable without full reparation to the 'depressed' classes as it is impossible without real Hindu-Muslim unity. In my opinion we have become 'pariahs of the Empire' because we have created 'pariahs' in our midst. The slave owner is always more hurt than the slaves. We shall be unfit to gain Swaraj so long as we would keep in bondage a fifth of the population of Hindustan.....And if it is religion so to treat the 'pariah'; it is the religion of the white race to segregate us."<sup>145</sup>

Unity among the various sections of the Indian society a must in leading a struggle against Britishers otherwise the Britishers would exploit the situation by placing one section against other. "This Government of ours is an unscrupulous corporation. It has ruled by dividing Mussulmans from Hindus. It is quite capable of taking advantage of the internal weaknesses of Hinduism. It will set the 'depressed' classes against the rest of the Hindus, non-Brahmins against Brahmins."<sup>146</sup> "The structure of the Government rests entirely on the foundation of our weaknesses. Today, it may be the Hindu-Muslim question, tomorrow it may be that of Brahmins and non-Brahmins, then again that of untouchability, ....This

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<sup>145</sup> *CWMMG, Vol. 22, p. 6*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

Government has exploited all these weaknesses of ours. It is because of this that I have described our movement as one of self-purification".<sup>147</sup> He adopted the anti-untouchability campaign against the divide and rule policy of the British government.

To the question put forward by a gentle man from Ankleshwar that by introducing the issue of untouchability in the national movement Gandhi have done great harm to the country he answered that "some social questions are of such magnitude that they cannot but be made political issues. If we dismiss the question of Hindu-Muslim unity as a social one, our cart will get stalled in the very first stage of the journey. The problem of Brahmins and non-Brahmins in the South has become so acute that any political party which tries to bypass it will commit suicide. It is easy to decide whether or not a particular issue should be taken up in the national struggle. There is no choice but to solve a problem which, if left unsolved, would block our progress. I am positively of the view that, had I not taken up the problem of untouchability, our struggle would have made no headway."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *CWMG, Vol.24, p.90*

<sup>148</sup> *CWMG, Vol. 24, pp. 89-90*

After the withdrawal of the Non Cooperation movement Congress turned its attention towards the constructive programme of Gandhi. "In 1923, the congress decided to take active steps towards the eradication of untouchability. 'The basic strategy it adopted was to educate and mobilize opinion among caste Hindus on the question.'<sup>149</sup>

One of the important work that Congress carried on in south India as a part of the campaign against untouchability was the movement for temple-entry in Kerala. The first major struggle of the movement was the famous Vaikam Satyagraha in north Travancore. The roads around the great Siva temple at Vaikam in north Travancore were closed to *avarna* Hindus. The demand at Vaikam was not for temple entry, but for the right of *avarna* Hindus to use the roads near the temple.<sup>150</sup>

Vaikkam Satyagraha began on March 30, 1924.<sup>151</sup> Volunteers arrived from different parts of Kerala. This Satyagraha generated enthusiasm in regional as well as national level. Gandhi advised volunteers on their methods of Satyagraha. He was not in favour of receiving any outside help for the Satyagraha. He also prevented Muslims

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<sup>149</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p.230

<sup>150</sup> Robin Jeffrey, 'Temple-entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 4, No.8, March 1976, pp.14-15

<sup>151</sup> T.K. Ravindran, *op. cit.*, p.57

and Christians from participating in the Satyagraha. He advised the Vaikkam Deputationists that steps should be taken to arrange an absolutely peaceful and non-violent procession from Vaikkam to Trivandrum and back consisting of caste Hindus alone.<sup>152</sup> But the *Savarna Hindu Jatha* failed in getting any concession from the Maharani Sethu Laxmi Bai.

Vaikkam Satyagraha prolonged for a year. People lost their patience and turned to violent methods. Gandhi's visit to Vaikkam eased the situation.<sup>153</sup> Gandhi and Police Commissioner Mr.Pitt arrived at a compromise formula on the basis of which Satyagraha was called off on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1925 and all the roads around Vaikkam temple, except two lanes, were opened to all castes.<sup>154</sup>

It was in Vaikkam that the Satyagraha was experimented in its complete form to eradicate a social evil. It was the first major movement for the removal of untouchability in no ambiguous term.<sup>155</sup> Infact, it represented a turning point in the campaign against untouchability.<sup>156</sup> It

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96

<sup>153</sup> *AICC File No. 14(Part I) 1925*, NMML

<sup>154</sup> T.K. Ravindran, *op. cit.*, p.203

<sup>155</sup> Anima Bose, 'Gandhi's Satyagraha for Human Rights at Vykam, 1924', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 38<sup>th</sup> session, Utkal University, 1977, p.424

<sup>156</sup> B. Natesan, 'Mahatma Gandhi and Untouchability', *The Indian Review*, March,

remained within the limits of Gandhi's plan. It failed in securing the declared objective. But it bolstered the spirits of demoralized Congress. It was with this movement the Congress in Malabar could attempt to bring all the castes into one consolidated movement.<sup>157</sup>

Another important movement for temple entry which became popular was the Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931-32). The Satyagraha was started on November 1<sup>st</sup>, which was observed as All Kerala Temple Entry Day. The Volunteers were led to the temple premises in a *jatha* and two Satyagrahis- each one belonging to the lower castes- were posted on all three entrances to the temple.<sup>158</sup> It roused the passions of the people and they attempted to force entry into the temple which resulted in violence the temple was closed K. Kelappan the leader of the Satyagraha entered on an indefinite fast on 21 September, 1932.<sup>159</sup> On Gandhi's advice he broke his fast on October 2, 1932.<sup>160</sup> Gandhi suggested holding a referendum to solve the problem. A limited referendum was held thereafter under the auspices of the Congress among the Hindus of Ponnani taluk in order to ascertain the views of the people on the issue of

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1933, p.183

<sup>157</sup> Dilip M. Menon, *op. cit.*, p.82

<sup>158</sup> K. Gopalankutty, 'The Guruvayur Satyagraha 1931-32', *Journal of Kerala Studies*, December, 1981, p. 177

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177

<sup>160</sup> K. Kelappan, *Oral History Transcripts*, NMML.

temple entry. About 70% of the people signified their approval of temple entry for untouchables. Though the Guruvayur Satyagraha failed to achieve its immediate objective, it had helped to create a climate in favour of the eradication of untouchability and also mobilized the masses and gave them access to the political movements.

The Guruvayur Satyagraha had been successfully 'nationalized' and made to conform to the necessities of national politics. In Malabar, Gandhi's intervention hobbled a significant movement towards a politics which could have embraced lower castes and untouchables.

In assessing the results of the movement we must take into consideration the ideological impact the movement created rather than confine ourselves to an evaluation of the apparent result of the failure to get the temple opened for the untouchables. For the first time in Malabar the movement focused the plight of the untouchables and it created a 'social mobility' which was conducive for the success of the later political movements. It should be noted that it was only in areas where the C.D.M. was strong that peasants and workers movements grew up in strength in the late thirties.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> K. Gopalan Kutty, *op. cit* p180

Following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact the Civil-Disobedience Movement was temporarily suspended in March 1931. Congress decided to take part in the second session of the Round Table Conference which began in September 1931. Gandhi was the sole representative of the congress. Besides Gandhi some of the newcomers in the Conference were Muhammed Iqbal, the Business magnate J.D. Birla, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu and Ali Imam. But they failed in arriving at a unanimous opinion. Civil Disobedience Movement was resumed in January 1932.

The British Prime minister announced the Communal Award in August 1932. The Award allotted to each minority a number of seats in the legislatures to be elected on the basis of a separate electorate that is Muslims would be elected only by Muslims and Sikhs only by Sikhs, and so on. Muslims, Sikhs and Christians had already been treated as minorities. The Award declared the Depressed Classes (Scheduled Castes of today) also to be a minority community entitled to separate electorate and thus separated them from the rest of the Hindus.<sup>162</sup> Gandhi who was in Yeravda jail at that time, strongly reacted against it. Even though separate electorate was given to other communities also Gandhi reacted

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<sup>162</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 290

against the separate electorate provided to the depressed classes. About which he said: "Muslims and Sikhs are all well organized. The untouchables are not. There is very little political consciousness among them and they are so horribly treated that I want to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates, their lives would be miserable in villages which are the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. It is the superior class of Hindus who have to do penance for having neglected the untouchables for ages. That penance can be done by active social reform and by making the lot of the untouchables more bearable by acts of service, but not by asking for separate electorates for them. By giving them separate electorates you will throw the apple of discord between the untouchables and the orthodox. You must understand I can tolerate the proposal for special representation of the Mussalmans and the Sikhs only as a necessary evil. It would be a positive danger for the untouchables".<sup>163</sup>

Nationalists also opposed the separate electorates as it would help only in separate the depressed classes from the rest of Hindus. 'What was needed was not the protection of the so-called interests of the Depressed classes in terms of seats in the legislatures or jobs but the 'root and branch' eradication of untouchability.'<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *CWMMG, Vol. 54, p.83*

<sup>164</sup> Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p.291

Mahatma Gandhi established the All India Anti-Untouchability League on 28 September, 1932. It was renamed as Harijan Sevak Sangh in December 1932.<sup>165</sup> The Sangh started numerous schools for the Dalits including residential vocational schools. In addition, scavengers' unions, cooperative credit societies, and housing societies, were formed.<sup>166</sup> He also started a weekly called *Harijan* in order to propagate the need for Harijan upliftment work. In 1933 Gandhi confessed the failure of the movement and resigned his membership of the congress. He withdrew from active politics and confined his work for the uplift of Harijans.<sup>167</sup> On 7 November 1933 Mahatma Gandhi began his countrywide tour to propagate against the evil of untouchability. The tour was started from Wardha and ended at Varanasi. He toured for nine months covering more than 20,000 kilometers, addressing meetings, collecting funds and making the caste Hindus aware of the adverse effects of untouchability on Hindu society.<sup>168</sup> The tour had lifted the Depressed Classes problem from the status of a social reform to the pedestal of the greatest socio-religious upheaval of Modern Hinduism and perhaps the biggest humanitarian

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<sup>165</sup> R.K. Kshirsagar, *op. cit.* p.118

<sup>166</sup> A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1993, p. 267.

<sup>167</sup> *Home Political*, F. No. 50/15/33

<sup>168</sup> R.K. Kshirsagar, *op. cit.*, p. 118

movement of modern times.<sup>169</sup> But through tout his campaign; he was attacked by orthodox and social reactionaries.<sup>170</sup> Even then he continued his campaign.

Gandhi's decisions to withdrew from active politics and confine his work to the upliftment of Harijans annoyed other Congress leaders and the masses as well. Jawaharlal reacted: "The concentration on non-political issues and the personal and self-created entanglements which led Gandhi to desert his comrades in the middle of the struggle were amazingly casual and likely to be fatal to the movement."<sup>171</sup>

Vithalbhai Patel and Subhas Bose characterized the decision taken by Gandhi to suspend the civil disobedience an "admission of defeat" and the statement continued, "The later action of Mr. Gandhi in suspending Civil Disobedience is a confession of failure. We are clearly of the opinion the Mr. Gandhi as a political leader has failed. The time has therefore, come for a radical re-organization of the Congress on a new principle with a new method, for which a new leader is essential, as it is unfair to expect Mr. Gandhi to work the programme not consistent with

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<sup>169</sup> AICC File No.G-14, 1934-35, NMML

<sup>170</sup> See Bipan Chandra et. al, *op. cit*, p.292

<sup>171</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

his life-long principles.”<sup>172</sup> E.M.S. was of the opinion that “...this was a great blow to the freedom movement. For this led to the diversion of the people’s attention from the objective of full independence to the mundane issue of uplift of the Harijans.”<sup>173</sup>

E.M.S. says that Gandhi always worked according to the interests of the bourgeois.<sup>174</sup> He considers this as a reason which made Gandhi to turn his attention from the civil Disobedience movement to a comparatively lesser problem of the upliftment of Harijans. As against this he also argues that Gandhi adopted such a method to overcome the existing political crisis and thereby to re open a channel to make discussions with the British. ‘With this aim in mind he selected the Harijan upliftment programme which had both political and social character.’<sup>175</sup>

British government felt that “although Mr. Gandhi’s present activities are confined to questions of social reform, he has not yet abandoned his creed of hostility to Government, nor has he called off the

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<sup>172</sup> Pattabhi Sitaramayya, quoted in E.M.S. Nampoodiripad, *A History of Indian Freedom Struggle*, Social Scientist Press, Trivandrum, 1986, P. 293

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289

<sup>174</sup> E.M.S. Nampoodiripad, *Gandhiyum Gandhisavum* (in Malayalam), Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 1994, p.10

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

Civil disobedience movement”.<sup>176</sup> They also worried that “whatever may be the nominal purpose of these subscriptions, their effect is to add to the funds available for Mr. Gandhi’s political purposes.”<sup>177</sup> Even though it was generally considered as a social reform movement government decided to adopt a neutral stand on the issue.

### **Gandhi and Ambedkar:**

B.R. Ambedkar, a Mahar from a Ratnagiri army family, appeared on the political scene for the first time in 1919, when he was called to testify to the Southborough Committee.<sup>178</sup> He became an undisputed leader of Dalits.

In Ambedkar’s opinion “The Hindus have an innate and inveterate conservatism and they have a religion which is incompatible with liberty, equality and fraternity i.e. with democracy.”<sup>179</sup> Ambedkar traces the development of the untouchables to the traditional caste system. According to him, untouchability is the product of caste system. But Gandhi does not accept this view of Ambedkar. Gandhi is opposed to the

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<sup>176</sup> *Home Political File No. 4/13/1933*, NAI

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Antony Copley, *Gandhi Against the Tide*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998 (Second Impression), p. 76

<sup>179</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, *Gandhi and Gandhism*, Bheem Partika Publications, Jullundar, 1970, p.3

idea that untouchables are the by-product of the caste system. Ambedkar stood for the complete elimination of caste system and Gandhi was a strong believer in the caste system.<sup>180</sup> This led to a strong difference of opinion between them. According to Ambedkar it was the Dalits themselves to lead the struggle against the domination of the caste Hindus. But Gandhi argued that it was the caste- Hindus who should lead the movement against untouchability. He considered it as sin committed by the caste-Hindus and he want them to atone for this. Ambedkar considered that unless the Indian people secured political power and that power did not concentrate in the hands of the socially suppressed section of the Indian society, it was not possible to completely wipe out all social, legal and cultural disabilities, from which that section suffered.<sup>181</sup> To Ambedkar Gandhi's Harijan Sevak Sangh was "one of the main techniques which has enabled Mr. Gandhi to be a successful humbug."<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Gandhi disagreed with Dr. Ambedkar when the latter asserted that 'the outcaste is a by-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. And nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system. 'On the contrary, Gandhiji said that whatever the 'limitations and defects' of Varnashram, 'there is nothing sinful about it, as there is about untouchability.' He believed that purged of untouchability, itself a product of 'the distinction of high and low' and not of the caste system, this system could function in a manner that would make each caste 'complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other.'-Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 294

<sup>181</sup> A.R. Desai, *Social...*, P.268

<sup>182</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, *op. cit.*, p.6

In the First Round Table Conference 'Ambedkar spoke at the conference for a unitary state and adult suffrage with reserved seats and safeguards for untouchables.'<sup>183</sup> Congress was absent in the first Round Table Conference. Following Gandhi-Irwin Pact Congress decided to attend the second Round Table Conference as the sole rep. of the Indian people. The failure of the second Round Table Conference and the communal Award led to a confrontation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Gandhi and nationalists stood against the separate electorate to untouchables. He said "I look upon the problem of untouchability from a purely religious point of view. There must be, therefore, no separate electorates in any case. But the reservation of seats for them, if it is statutory, will not test the caste Hindus and, therefore, will not be a real *Prayashchitta*' on their part. We cannot bargain with the 'untouchables'. What is necessary is that the suspicion which they harbour in their minds should go."<sup>184</sup> But Ambedkar supported it. And it led to an open confrontation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. When Ambedkar changed his position to support separate electorates (which he did when it was obvious there would be no universal suffrage) he came to represent, very simply, the most vulnerable force among all those claiming special

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<sup>183</sup> Gail Omvedt, *Dalits And The Democratic Revolution – Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p.69

<sup>184</sup> *CWVG*, Vol. 55, p. 429

protection.<sup>185</sup> Both of them claimed to speak on behalf of untouchables. ‘There was a vast difference in points of view, with Ambedkar stressing the need for political power for the *Dalits*, and with Gandhi arguing for reform and protection from above.’<sup>186</sup>

Gandhi demanded that the representatives of the depressed classes should be elected by the general electorate under a wide, if possible universal, common franchise. In order to get his demand accepted he decided to go on fast unto death on 20 September 1932. He said that his fast is only against separate electorates, and not against statutory reservation of seats. ‘The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the “depressed” classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise no matter how wide it is.’<sup>187</sup> *Herald Tribune* an American journal wrote that Gandhi now speaks not to occidental gallery but “as high caste Hindu in defence of exclusive right of this

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<sup>185</sup> Gail Omvedt, *op. cit.*, p. 170

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *CWVG, Vol. 56*, p.347

social, racial and religious aristocracy to dispose of material and political affairs of bottom castes. He is calling on his fellow aristocrats to resist British decision that would arm pariah against caste system. Gandhi does not question justice of British allocation of representatives to non-Hindu minorities in India but alleges his reading to starve rather than see seventy millions of his fellow Hindus who are in social inferiors guaranteed even relatively small voice in India's Legislative Councils."<sup>188</sup>

The Fast came to an end with the Yeraveda Pact <sup>189</sup> also known as Poona Pact between the leaders acting on behalf of the depressed classes and of the rest of the Hindu community, regarding the representation of the depressed classes in legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare. Gandhi broke the fast when Government accepted the Pact "....as I have already said. When on the British Government's acceptance of relevant portion of the pact I broke the fast, I solemnly assured Dr.

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<sup>188</sup> *Home Political File No. 35/25/1932*, NAI

<sup>189</sup> This conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto shall have the same rights as the other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and other public institutions. These right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity, and shall be one of the earliest Act of the Swaraj parliament, if they shall not have received such recognition before that time. It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by caste Hindus upon the so-called untouchable classes, including bar in the respect of admission to temples. (This resolution was drafted Gandhiji and passed by the by conference with Malaviyaji in the chair on September 25, 1932. *CWMG Vol. 58*, P. 311

Ambedkar and took a vow in the secret of my heart and in the presence of God that I would hold myself as a hostage for the fulfillment of the resolution above mentioned, and the general carrying out of the pact by the caste Hindus. It would be a betrayal of trust and a betrayal of the Harijans if, in any shape or form, I slackened my effort or gave up altogether the intention of fasting in connection with the removal of untouchability”.<sup>190</sup>

According to the Poona Pact the idea of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes was abandoned but the seats reserved for them in the provincial legislatures were increased from seventy-one in the Award to 147 and in the Central Legislature to eighteen percent of the total.

The Poona Pact ended the confrontation between Gandhi and Ambedkar for the time being with the formation of Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932 there started difference of opinion regarding the organization and the programmes of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. There were two issues: whether the League/Sangh would be controlled by caste Hindus or whether the Dalits would have at least a share in control; and whether it would seek only to ‘abolish untouchability’ or aim at the abolition of *Chaturvarnya* itself. Gandhi firmly held out for caste Hindu control on the

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.311-312

grounds that since Hindus themselves must do this; he also stressed that he was not against *Chaturvarnya* as a system. It was simply impossible for Gandhi and Ambedkar to work together on this basis.<sup>191</sup> The break was complete when they adopted different ways for the emancipation of the Dalits. Following the Poona Pact, Gandhi began an anti-untouchability drive that included temple entry and bills in legislatures throughout the country as well as the longer-term 'Harijan campaign.' Ambedkar and his followers, in contrast, turned to a clear rejection of Hinduism and to economic and political radicalism, expressed in the conversion announcement of 1935 and the founding of the Independent Labour Party in 1936.<sup>192</sup>

Even though Gandhi started the anti-untouchability movement as a religious movement or for the purification of Hindu society it had a positive impact on the political movement. With his anti-untouchability campaign he was able to bring a section of the Indian Society who were hitherto politically not mobilized. According to Sumit Sarkar, "From a more long-term point of view, Harijan welfare work by Gandhi must have indirectly helped to spread the message of nationalism down to the lowest

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<sup>191</sup> Gail Omvedt, *op. cit.* p.176

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

and most oppressed section of rural society.”<sup>193</sup> But he criticizes Gandhi for confining the Harijan campaign to limited social reform (opening of wells, roads, and particularly temples, plus humanitarian work), delinking it from any economic demands (though very many Harijans were agricultural labourers) and also refusing to attack caste as a whole.<sup>194</sup> According to him ‘Gandhian Harijan work seems to have been in part a bid to establish hegemony over potentially more radical pressures from below.’<sup>195</sup> Gail Omvedt opines that ‘the failure of Gandhism to go beyond a spiritualistic and Hinduistic interpretation of a decentralized and village-based development left the anti-caste movement in a vacuum.’<sup>196</sup> What was more important is not the religious emancipation of Dalits but the fact that the anti-untouchability campaign of Gandhi created a situation conducive for the political movements.

While fighting untouchability he never attacked caste system moreover he advocated caste system. The reason for this may be not to alienate the upper caste Hindus who were dominant in congress leadership. Gandhi knew very well that his Harijan upliftment movement would annoy the caste Hindus and without their support it was not

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<sup>193</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India-185-1947*, Macmillan India Limited, Madras, 1995, p.329

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Gail Omvedt, *op. cit*, pp.226-227

possible to start such a movement. By advocating caste system he tried to seek the support of the upper caste Hindus. And by identifying himself as an untouchable he tried to impress the untouchables. He conducted tours to stir the enthusiasm of the masses and thereby he got opportunity to have informal political discussions.<sup>197</sup>

Gandhi's work for the uplift of the Harijans and Adivasis, who formed the bulk of the agricultural labourers, was also very important, for there could be no united struggle against colonialism without their support, active or passive. They would otherwise also be open to attempts by colonial authorities to create divisions among the rural masses during periods of struggle. Khadi and Harijan work had significance. Without their social and economic uplift, people who were suppressed for centuries were not able to conceive of participating in struggles of any kind. Contrary to certain present day myth, the very poor and the demoralized do not find it easy to fight. Constructive work filled these sections with a new hope, helped and trained them to lose their fear, made them self-reliant and enabled at least some of them to join the struggle for freedom and for their own social and economic advancement.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> E.M.S. *History...*, p. 295

<sup>198</sup> Bipan Chandra, *Indian...*, pp.38-39

While starting the movement he was not unaware of the political consequences of the movement. Even though he repeatedly stressed on the social and religious part of the movement it indirectly gave an opportunity to mobilize the Dalits. He considered it as a strategy against the divide and rule policy of the British. That may be the reason why he stressed unity among various section of Hindu society along with the Hindu-Muslim unity. He gave equal importance to both. From the very first movement onwards he stressed on the need for the eradication of untouchability. Dalits who were suppressed by the caste –Hindus considered him as a saviour. And he gave wide popularity to this movement by conducting tours and he identified himself as an untouchable by choice. The criticism leveled against him was that he confined the whole movement within religious frame work and never gave importance to the economic emancipation of the Dalits. But what is important here is the widening of the mass base of the national movement by mobilizing the downtrodden classes of India and thereby giving them also access in the national movement. And it is Gandhi who evolved serious programmes to participate them in the political movement whatever be the character of participation.

### C) GANDHI AND WOMEN:

The participation of women in the National movement both during the Gandhian period and pre-Gandhian didn't get enough importance in the writings about the National movement. The active participation of women in the National movement was not seen as a political activity but most of the historians tried to link women's participation in the struggle with women's education or the social reform movement. They do not examine either the reasons or the implications of this spontaneous upsurge of political activity by women of all classes.<sup>199</sup>

Participation of women in the Indian National movement started even before the coming of Gandhi. ".....the Indian National Congress, from its very inception, sought to align women with the nationalist cause; despite its variegated limitations, the Congress had evolved a tradition of women's participation even in the pre-Gandhian era."<sup>200</sup> Swadeshi struggle witnessed the active involvement of women.<sup>201</sup> The mobilization of women was attempted through the publication of pamphlets, public

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<sup>199</sup> See Introduction, Leela Kasturi and Veena Mazumdar, (ed.), *Women and Indian Nationalism*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, p. xxvi. and Tanika Sarkar, *Bengal 1928-34, The Politics of Protest*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 3

<sup>200</sup> Rajan Mahan, *Women in Indian National Congress*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p.71

<sup>201</sup> See for details, *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46

meetings held exclusively for women and new nationalist associations (in contrast to the elite association) which emerged during the Swadeshi period.<sup>202</sup> While in early phase of the Congress movement women's participation was strictly limited, during the Swadeshi movement, as a broad programme of activity was evolved, women began to play an active role.<sup>203</sup> Even then only the middle class women participated in the political activities. Except Sarala Devi Chaudharani there were no prominent leaders for the Swadeshi movement. It was a serious limitation of the movement. Even then the Swadeshi movement appears to have functioned as a 'catalyst' for women's politicization in Bengal and it is noteworthy that many of the Bengali women who were to later actively participate in Gandhian movements (such as Ashalata Sen for example) had gained their first political experience during the Swadeshi movement.<sup>204</sup> With the Swadeshi Movement women's involvement with the nationalist movements started.

Even though the social reform movement for the emancipation of women was started during the period of Raja Mohan Roy itself it became a national issue with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi. Now they started

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<sup>202</sup> Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, p. xlvi

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53

working actively in the national movement. One of the most amazing events of contemporary Indian history was the rapid entry of Indian women into politics especially after 1919.<sup>205</sup>

Gandhi never confined his activities in the political arena alone. Along with the political activities he tried to effect changes in the existing traditions and social customs without depreciating<sup>206</sup> them altogether but by making certain changes to conform it to his political methods. His perception about women made a breakthrough in the existing pattern. “Instead of women being merely the recipients of more humane treatment, he gave subjectivity and centrality to women.”<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> A.R. Desai, *Social...*, p. 278

<sup>206</sup> “Women’s being placed on a level with Sudra has done unimaginable harm to Hindu society. These statements of mine may have verbal similarity with the occasional attacks of Christians, but, apart from this similarity, there is no other common ground between us. The Christians, in their attacks, seek to strike at the roots of Hinduism. I look upon myself as an orthodox Hindu and my attack proceed from the desire to rid Hinduism of its defects and restore it to its pristine glory. The Christian critic, by demonstrating the imperfection of Smritis, tries to show that they are just ordinary books. My attempt is to show that the imperfection of the smirits comes from interpolated passages, that is to say, verses inserted by persons accepted as smritikaras in the period of our degeneration. It is easy to demonstrate the grandeur of the smritis minus these verses. I do not have the slightest desire to put up a weak defence of Hinduism, believing out of false pride or in ignorance, and wanting others to believe that there is not error in the smritis or in the other accepted books of the Hindu religion. I am convinced that such an effort will not raise the Hindu religion but will degrade it rather. A religion which gives the foremost place to truth can afford no admixture of untruth.” Gandhi’s Speech at Bhagini Samaj, Bombay, Feb.20, 1918, *CWVG*, Vol.16, p. 272

<sup>207</sup> Shirin Mehta, ‘The Freedom Struggle and Gujarati Women as grassroot workers and Satyagrahis – 1915-1930’ in Nawas B. Mody, (ed.), *Women in India’s Freedom Struggle*, Allied Publishers LTD., Mumbai, 2000, p.186

It was argued that the whole system of Gandhian technique was such that women found no difficulty in participating in the movements organized by him. That is why 'women from all ranks of society, educated and uneducated, highly sophisticated ladies and rustic women, all gathered round him. Even women of orthodox families who had never been out of their homes joined in the struggle. Their men folk were sure that no harm could come to them in a movement guided and controlled by Gandhiji. Under his inspiring leadership, his fostering care and loving guidance they could play a significant part in the freedom fight.'<sup>208</sup>

Through Satyagraha he brought Indian women to public life.

Gandhi was very much aware of the traditions that badly affected the women and relegated them to the status of Shudras. He vehemently criticized child marriage and enforced widowhood of girls at a very young age. He advocated change in the marriageable age but he was of the opinion that "it is not legislation that will cure a popular evil, it is enlightened public opinion that can do it."<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Sucheta Kripalani, 'Mahatma Gandhi: Leader and Teacher of Women' in Verinder Grover and Ranjana Arora, (ed.), *Sucheta Kripalani A Biography of Her Vision and Ideas*, Deep and Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1998, pp.45-46

<sup>209</sup> CWMG, Vol. 36, p. 215. *Young India*, 19/8/1926.

He was against the Purdah System and discarded it describing as “recent institution”.<sup>210</sup> He also criticized the parents for not providing education to girl child. He supported girls’ education and in his opinion education imparted to girls should be different from that of boys because, “nature has made men and women different, it is necessary to maintain a difference between education of the two.”<sup>211</sup>

Gandhi was a firm advocate of equality between men and women. In his opinion, “men and women are of equal rank, but they are not identical. Man is supreme in the outward activities and home life is entirely the sphere of woman.”<sup>212</sup> Gandhi had confidence that women would be able to face any challenge. He did not hesitate to send women to face difficult situations. In the words of Sucheta Kripalani, “.....during his historic tour in Noakhali, I remember once he decided to send young Abha out to work in a difficult village.....where there was intense bitterness between the Hindus and Muslims.”<sup>213</sup>

Moreover he argued that, “women must have votes and an equal legal status. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the

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<sup>210</sup> CWMG, Vol. 38, p. 230. *Young India*, 29/3/1927.

<sup>211</sup> CWMG, Vol. 16, pp. 93-94

<sup>212</sup> CWMG, Vol. 16, p. 275. *The Hindu*, 26/2/1918

<sup>213</sup> Sucheta Kripilani, *op. cit.*, p. 49

point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation.”<sup>214</sup>

Gandhi included the service of women in his constructive programme. In which he asked congress men to enable women to realize their full status and play their part as equals of men. “Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from the previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fullness in their behaviour towards women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. It is the privilege of Congressmen to give the women of India a lifting hand.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> *Young India*, 21/7/1921

<sup>215</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme Its Meaning and Place*, (First Edition 1941) Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1998 p. 16

## Women and Political Activities:

Gandhi considered the lack of participation of women in the movements as a reason for the failure of the movements. “Many of our movements stop half-way because of the condition of our women. Much of our work does not yield appropriate results; our lot is like that of the penny-wise and pound-foolish trader who does not employ enough capital in his business.”<sup>216</sup>

Gandhi had faith in the capacity of women to participate in political activities. Women found no difficulty in participating in non-violent movements. His *Khadi* programme was also practicable for women.

The Indian tradition had a great influence upon him which is very clear from the fact that he often used to give examples of great female personalities of Hindu tradition.<sup>217</sup> He used traditional symbols to convey contemporary socio-political messages upon the deep resources available within themselves as women and within their rich and fertile religio-cultural inheritance in order to participate in public life and play the vital

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<sup>216</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 16, p.274. *The Hindu*, 26-2-1918.

<sup>217</sup> To inspite the downtrodden women of India, Gandhi repeatedly mentioned about Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi but he totally dismissed the more “situationally relevant Rani of Jhansi”. Madhu Kishwar says that the stress was given to “the superiority of women’s suffering and self sacrifice rather than aggressive assertion and forceful intervention to protect their interests and to gain political power”. Madhu Kishwar, ‘Gandhi on Women’ in, *EPW*, Vol. xx, No.40, October 5, 1985, pp.1691 - 1692

role which he envisaged for them in the struggle for *Swaraj* and the quest for *Sarvodaya*.<sup>218</sup>

Satyagraha was based on the qualities which were traditionally associated with women: love, receptivity, dialogue, patience, ability to endure pain and suffering and faith in life. Far from regarding these feminine qualities as weak, Gandhi radicalized their meanings and gave a challenge to the dominant principle of masculinity.<sup>219</sup> Gandhi considered women as the “incarnation of ahimsa” and since strength was moral power, woman was “immeasurably man’s superior”.<sup>220</sup> His belief in the capacity of women to endure hardship (and the feminization of his own personality) enabled Gandhi to communicate with women and thereby make them active participants in the non-violent struggle for liberation.<sup>221</sup>

Gandhian project did not see femininity / Spirituality as an obstacle to be overcome; it was rather a source of immense potential and strength.<sup>222</sup> The principles of Satyagraha and ahimsa, Swadeshi and Sarvodaya reflect a feminist critique of the powerful British State in India

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<sup>218</sup> Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, p. 91

<sup>219</sup> Avijit Pathak, *Indian Modernity Contradictions Paradoxes and Possibilities*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1998, p. 124

<sup>220</sup> Gandhi Quoted in, *Ibid.*, p.124

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>222</sup> Ashis Nandy, quoted in *Ibid.*,

as ethically inferior to Swaraj.<sup>223</sup> In Gandhi's Science of Swaraj, women appear as a collective representation by means of which the superiority and inviolability of indigenous social tradition is demonstrated against the modern.<sup>224</sup>

According to Erik Erikson Gandhi's 'aggressive assertion of femininity' reflects a competitiveness in his mentality. In this view, Gandhi was unable to psychologically and emotionally accept the 'natural' superiority of women in possessing such virtues as love, kindness or ahimsa, and hence attempted to become more maternal than the most motherly of mothers.<sup>225</sup> According to Vinaylal, "Gandhi was possessed of a civilization sensibility where the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine were not so easily drawn, a sensibility akin to that which produced images of the ardhhanariswara in Indian art and culture, which could give birth to schools of painting where Radha is transformed into Krishna and Krishna in turn sports the looks and clothes of Radha and which today still has a place, albeit an increasingly maligned one, for a large number of people, the hijras, who live on the

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<sup>223</sup> Amrit Srinivasan, 'Women and Reform of Indian Tradition: Gandhian Alternative to Liberalism' in Leela Kasturi and Veena Mazumdar edited, *op. cit.*, p.7

<sup>224</sup> Amrit Srinivasan 'Women and Reform Of Indian Tradition: Gandhian Alternative to Liberalism', *EPW*, Vol. xxii, no.51, December19,1987, p.2226.

<sup>225</sup> Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth – On the Origins of Militant Non Violence*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, 1969, pp.111 - 112

border between the feminine and the masculine. The presence of the masculine within the feminine, and conversely of the feminine within the masculine, described a dialectical and dialogic relationship between the sexes.<sup>226</sup>

His vision of women was shaped by a multiplicity of sources. In addition to his personal upbringing, psychic predilections and cultural background, especially his relationships with his mother and wife, his vision was also moulded and refined by his long association with a large number of women colleagues and followers.<sup>227</sup>

Unlike the social reformers, Gandhi had realized some of the negative consequences of colonial rule on women's economic status.<sup>228</sup> The realization strengthened his decision to launch the khadi movement which would offer to the masses of women an immediate, open channel

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<sup>226</sup> Vinay Lal, 'The Mother in the 'Father of the Nation''  
[www.sscnet.ucla.edu/Southasia/History/Gandhi/Gandhi Mother.html](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/Southasia/History/Gandhi/Gandhi%20Mother.html). – 19<sup>th</sup>  
 September, 2002. Originally Published in *Manushi: A Journal of Women and Society*, No. 91 (November – December 1995):27-30.

<sup>227</sup> Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, p.89. His association with some efficient women like, Olivse Schreiner, Millie Graham Polak, Sonya Schlesin etc. while he was in South Africa, convinced him the capacity of women to perform public activities. The works of his women associates in India for example, Sarojini naidu, Gungabehn, Anasuya Sarabhi, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandi, Madeleine Slade, Sushila Nayyar, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur etc. later proved this through their work. For a detailed account of the influence of these women on Gandhi, see, Eleanor Morton, *Women Behind Mahatma Gandhi*, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1961.

<sup>228</sup> Mazumdar, V., Quoted in Leela Kasturi and Veena Mazumdar edited, *op. cit.*, p.

for their participation in the national struggle. More than that through Khadi movement he want to convince men that women's participation was as essential as the participation of men for the success of the Swadeshi and boycott movement. Later, he extended this argument to the winning of full freedom for India and nation-building. It aimed at the economic independence of women and so Gandhi's Swaraj meant not political emancipation only but social and economic emancipation also.

Gandhi asked women to start spinning clubs. It was through spinning that he wanted to politicize women imbuing them with ideas of Swadeshi, opposition to foreign rule and also providing them with tangible evidence of their own participation in a political process. It would give them an idea of their role in the fight for economic freedom.<sup>229</sup> The spinning could be undertaken at home and it would bring the issue of Swadeshi right inside the home and would make women participate in economic nationalism. In addition, it gave women a sense of participating in the movement without ignoring her traditional role. The effect was radical. As Sujata Patel has noted "this extension of politics to the

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<sup>229</sup> Aparna Basu, 'Gujarati Women's Response to Gandhi 1920-1942' in *Samya Shakti, A Journal Of Women Studies*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1984, p. 8

household made possible a radical review of women's role in her domestic space and gave her a new status ad legitimacy in this space."<sup>230</sup>

Women's participations in these movements passed through three successive stages: (i) the Kheda peasant Movement in 1918 which constituted the formative period because the leaders of the Kheda Satyagraha, Gandhi and Vallabh Bhai, could not evolve a unilinear, cohesive structure. (ii) The period between the Non-Co- Operation Movement of 1920 and the Simon Commission of 1927 witnessed increased political consciousness among women. During this phase they came out as leaders, link leaders, volunteer and picketers, Spinners of Khadi and political activists. (iii) The Bardoli peasant struggle in 1928 and the Dandi March of 1930 marked the mature phase of women's participation. In each phase it was claimed city bred women were brought closer and closer with the rural women. It had bridged the gulf between them as Gandhiji had intended from the beginning.<sup>231</sup>

While traveling in the villages of Kaira in order to organize the people against the Government he made special appeal to the Kaira women. In his Speech at Uttarsanda he said the "It was my hope that

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<sup>230</sup> Sujata Patel, 'Construction and Reconstruction of Woman in Gandhi' in *EPW*, February 20, 1988, p.383

<sup>231</sup> Shirin Mehta, *op. cit.*, p.186

women also would be present at this meeting. In this work there is as much need of women as of men. If women join our struggle and share our sufferings, we can do fine work.”<sup>232</sup> Women responded to his call and participated in it actively. While addressing the public at Bombay he remarked thus: “Not only men, but women also have joined this struggle. Wonderful scenes are witnessed at the village meetings. The women declare that even if the government seize their buffaloes, attach their jewellery or confiscate their lands, the men must honour their pledge.”<sup>233</sup>

As the first non-cooperation movement was launched he made special appeals to women asking them to spin, wear khadi, boycott government schools and colleges and remove untouchability. He asked women to sign pledges of non-cooperation. He compared British rule to Ravana and so the women must not cooperate with the Rakshasi Sarkar. “He asked women to participate in their husbands’ activities like Sita, Savitri and Damayanti.”<sup>234</sup> He did not shut his eyes to the actual situation of women. He laid stress on that part of the non-cooperation movement in which women could participate without having to make the attempt to

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<sup>232</sup> Gandhi’s Speech at Uttarsanda, April 16, 1918, *CWMG*, Vol. 16, P.396

<sup>233</sup> Speech at a Public Meeting in Bombay, April 23, 1918, *CWMG*, vol. 16, p. 457.

<sup>234</sup> Aparna Basu, *op. cit.*, p.8

break free of their fetters. Women were given special responsibility of popularizing Swadeshi.<sup>235</sup>

In the first non co-operation movement emphasis was laid on spinning. This enabled women to participate in the movement while remaining at home. “Perhaps a gradual release from age old restraints was considered more practicable by Gandhi”.<sup>236</sup>

Even though non-co-operation movement saw comparatively few women in participation the significance lies in their having come forth not in their numbers, but in the fact of their having organized meetings and demonstrations, and not in size of them. In a society where a child could become a widow before she had completed her first year of life, where girls were not educated lest they stray from the path of chastity or lose some of their submissiveness, it is significant that women responded at all to Gandhi’s call.<sup>237</sup>

The factors responsible for the response of Indian women were Gandhi’s repeated emphasis on ethical standards of behaviour, on the principles of non-violence and besides all these, the basic Gandhian

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<sup>235</sup> Uma Rao and Meera Devi, ‘Glimpses: UP Women’s Response to Gandhi 1921 – 1930’, in *Samya Shakti*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1984, p. 22

<sup>236</sup> Aparana Basu, *op. cit.*, p. 9

<sup>237</sup> Uma Rao and Meera Devi, *op. cit.*, p. 24

message for women was sensitive enough 'to touch the hearts' of Indian's womanhood. He always exhorted that the involvement of women in the movement was integral to the success of the movement. And moreover he devised his programme in such a way that, even while remaining at home, women could contribute to the movement. Because of his repeated emphasis on non-violent movement the men folk also didn't find any difficulty in sending their women to participate in Gandhian Movements. According to Tanika Sankar: "A more serious explanation would relate to the nature of the Gandhian movement itself and its implication for socially accepted, prescribed roles of women. Participation was intended for non-violent modes of action and would not entail the drastic violation of the feminine image that a violent struggle would have involved".<sup>238</sup> Participation in the Non-cooperation movement gave them an added inspiration to fight against the British Raj along with their men folk. The number of women participating in the first non-co-operation movement was not very great but their spirit of service and sacrifice was very much appreciable.<sup>239</sup>

The Satyagraha movement which was inaugurated by Gandhiji was such that women could not sit and watch the battle between the

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<sup>238</sup> Tanika Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 88

<sup>239</sup> Radha Krishna Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 62

government and the people and so a quick response was made to the call of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>240</sup> “This was unique in the entire history of India, the spectacle of hundreds of women taking part in political mass movement, picketing liquor shops, marching in demonstrations, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets. At one stroke, the Indian women broke through their age long restrictions. From docile domestic servants to their husbands and other male folk, they rose to the level of citizens, voting political programmes and participating in big political movements. Some of them like Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, and Vijayalaxmi Pandit, even became leaders of international repute.”<sup>241</sup> Though the number of women in active participation was very few and the number of women arrested very small, yet a beginning was made and an example set that, if need be, women would not hesitate to face the most difficult situations.

Even after the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement the Constructive Programme kept them active.<sup>242</sup> During the period between 1922 and 1928 Gandhi “spoke to women’s groups about constructive

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<sup>240</sup> Man Mohan Kaur, *Role of Women in the Freedom Movement 1857-1947*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 1968, p.150

<sup>241</sup> A.R. Desai, *Social...*, p. 279

<sup>242</sup> Only a few people took to the constructive programme for the programme’s sake. The other people took to it as part of the freedom movement like Rukmini Lakshmipathi. They were mostly political minded. S.Ambujammal, *Oral History Transcripts*, NMML

work, continuously reiterating that Sita was the ideal role model and spinning could solve India's and women's problems."<sup>243</sup> And moreover various women's organizations came into existence after the First World War Three major organizations were: the Women's Indian Association, the National Council of Women in India and the All-India Women's Conference. The link between social reform, the status of woman and the national movement proved to be a source of vital political support for the women's movement. And their participation became a potent source of numerical strength to the Congress led national movement. This mutually beneficial relationship inexorably led to considerable cooperation between leaders of the national movement and the women's movement because the support for each issue, whether women's or national was seen to further the struggle against colonialism.<sup>244</sup>

Even though the women did not participate in the early stages of the Bardoli Satyagraha (in 1928) they outnumbered men in political gatherings and held their own separate meetings at the later stages. In the words of Aparna Basu, "Bardoli set a new example as this was the first

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<sup>243</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *The New Cambridge History of India vol. 2 – Women in Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p.129

<sup>244</sup> See for details Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, pp.250-251

time that simple, uneducated, unsophisticated rural women participated in the freedom struggle.<sup>245</sup>

Women got an opportunity during the Civil-disobedience movement of early 1930s. From 1930-34, i.e., from the beginning of Salt Satyagraha in March 1930 until the final withdrawal of the Civil-disobedience in May 1934 the support and involvement of women was an essential element in the character of the anti-imperialist movement. But participation in Civil-disobedience movement involved much greater risk than the Non-cooperation movement of 1921 because of the policy of indiscriminate brutality even towards absolutely peaceful satyagrahis.

Gandhi chose salt as a symbol of protest against the British Raj. Even though at first everyone ridiculed Gandhi for having accepted the violation of salt laws as a mark of protest later everyone found that his Dandi march was effective in popularizing the movement. Indeed, the choice of salt clearly proved Gandhi's genius for seizing the significance of the seemingly trivial but essential details of daily living which are generally relegated to the women's sphere and relating them effectively to the nation endeavour.<sup>246</sup> Inevitably woman in thousands were inspired to

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<sup>245</sup> Aparna Basu, *op. cit.*, p.10

<sup>246</sup> Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, p. 265

actively participate in this campaign. Gandhi's choice of salt as the central issue appears to have been a sensitive and brilliant ploy to articulate connections between private and public life in order to ensure women's participation in the freedom struggle in increasing numbers and greater intensity.<sup>247</sup>

At first, women had not been allowed to participate as Gandhi had though they would complicate matters.<sup>248</sup> But the women who were eager to be considered as equal to man could not sit back. The group of followers who accompanied Gandhi to Dandi was an all-male contingent. Women protested against this. Gandhi resisted women's inclusion on the grounds that the British would call Indians cowards for hiding behind women, nevertheless as he marched to Dandi, women were present in large numbers at every stop on the way to greet and to imbibe Gandhi's message.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266

<sup>248</sup> Gandhi did not want to keep women in the march. He believed that, since English men would hesitate to touch women they would interpret it as an act of cowardice. See for details, Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, p.268. But Gandhi was not against the participation of women in such movement. It was very clear from the reply he had given to one worker "there is no question of any of you keeping aloof from the fiery furnace, should such ever come your way. I shall not shed a tear; I shall rejoice to hear, if any or all of you are found to have laid down your lives in trying to quell the disturbance. To be killed but never to kill is the law that governs us, and women should surely excel in this field." – *Harijan*, 14-4-1946 and 28-4-1946

<sup>249</sup> Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-70

Later they were permitted to take part in all phases of the campaign. “Thousands of women went to the sea coast like enthusiastic soldiers. But they wore neither uniforms nor carried weapons or even lathis. They had no training of any sort. They were mostly simple and illiterate women. People were ‘fascinated and awe-struck’ to see the unique scene.”<sup>250</sup> Gandhi gave them special programme to boycott foreign cloth and liquor shops through which he endorsed a more active political role which women had been demanding and yearning for. According to Geraldine Forbes “women’s participation in the civil disobedience movement of 1930-32 differed qualitatively and quantitatively from the early 1920s and won them a place in history.”<sup>251</sup>

In Bombay Muslim women showed great interest in the Congress movement. They assemble to hear Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Perin Captain, Gangaben Patel, Hansa Mehta and other leading members of the Women’s movement in Bombay. These leaders had an interesting talk with a large number of Muslim ladies who had assembled to hear about the importance and nation wide implications of the Congress movement. The Muslim ladies were very enthusiastic

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<sup>250</sup> Radha Krishan Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66

<sup>251</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *op. cit.*, p.129

particularly about the Swadeshi programme.<sup>252</sup> As a part of the propaganda two meetings were held at Parel in which Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Gangaben Patel explained to the women the implications of the Salt Civil-disobedience and the need for boycott of foreign cloth. The speakers were eagerly listened to and great enthusiasm was shown when Kamaladevi demonstrated the making of contraband salt from sea water.<sup>253</sup>

The response from women was spontaneous, strong and strikingly note worthy. They had determined to participate in the movement in the face of various punishments inflicted by the Government. The Government tried to crush the movement by lathi charge, shooting, arrests etc. Even at the face of such brutal repression they participated in the movement. That, despite such repression thousands of woman all over the sub-continent participated frequently in the second phase of Civil-disobedience was an eloquent testimony to their heroism and indicates the extent of women's activation during this momentous period.<sup>254</sup> The

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<sup>252</sup> The Bombay Congress Bulletin, No.8, Bombay, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1930, *AICC File No.G-118, 1930*, NMML

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* In Payyannur in north Kerala where the Salt Satyagraha campaign for Malabar district was inaugurated, women went to the sea, collected water in pots which they brought back to their houses and prepared contraband salt in their own houses. I am indebted to Dr. Anandi for this information.

<sup>254</sup> Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, p.298

atrocities did not discourage the women, but activated the desire in them to suffer more, to sacrifice more and to achieve more.<sup>255</sup>

The report issued by All India Congress Committee says: Total arrests up to the end of June are 2005, 933 of them being convicted. It is a “happy feature”, says the report, “that woman even in Purdah and pregnant ladies – are pouring in huge numbers in the cause of their motherland. The untiring zeal with which the lady satyagrahis worked shoulder to shoulder with the male volunteers and made the cause a greater success cannot be over estimated. The number of lady Satyagrahis is more than 138.” It is noteworthy that women braved abuse, insults, and even lathis along with their satyagrahi brothers. The Andhra Police seems to be mean enough not to spare women even from their undignified behaviour. The report describes nine cases of ill-treatment of women.<sup>256</sup>

According to Tanika Sarkar, “Massive arrests of nationalist men, right at the beginning of the movement, necessitated such large scale dependence on women.”<sup>257</sup> More over now the women started considering the participation in the political movement as a part of their religious duty.

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<sup>255</sup> Man Mohan Kaur, *op. cit.*, p.169

<sup>256</sup> Bulletin issued by the All India Congress Committee, *AICC File No.12, 1932*, NMML, p.89

<sup>257</sup> Tanika Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.140

“During the Salt War he had made heroines out of women living in purdah.”<sup>258</sup>

The role of women in the Civil-disobedience movement was reported in the first chapter of the report of the All India Congress Committee. Excerpts from the report are given below:

The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 worked many a miracle, but there was no greater miracle than the part of the women in this campaign. How deeply it had affected the people and touched the mainspring of Indian society was evidenced by the social revolution it brought about silently and without apparent effort. The shy and retiring woman of India, unused to the rough and tumble of politics, came out of the shelter of her home and insisted on being in the forefront of the struggle. When her men folk went to prison she did not flinch, but shouldered the burden and exhibited not only her wonderful powers of sacrifice and endurance, with which she is endowed in such rich measure, but surprising powers of organization and initiative. Many played a brave part in the deeds of 1930 and many are

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<sup>258</sup> Eleanor Morton, *op .cit.*, p. 230

entitled to a measure of credit for the achievement that came. All classes, in greater or less degree, joined in the struggle - Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, Jews etc. But all recognize and admit that the real credit and glory of achievement belongs to the womanhood of India. From the very beginning picketing and the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor were placed by Gandhiji in their charge and, as the campaign developed, they assumed more and more responsibility and largely directed the movement. Nearly one thousand of them went to prison. In most cities their *kesari* saris were familiar sights – emblems of gentleness and firmness, of courage and sacrifice and a terror to evil doers.<sup>259</sup>

The work of the women's organization was mainly focused on legal disabilities. But their concern for the welfare of the nation led them toward Gandhi's programme of reconstruction and social action. Women advocated equal rights. So they decided to support every law that seemed progressive. But Gandhi disagreed with this. Instead of supporting every

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<sup>259</sup> AICC File No. G-2, 1931, NMML, AICC meeting held at Karachi on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1931 directed Syed Mahmud, Jairamdas Doulatram, Jawaharlal Nehru (General Secretaries) to prepare a "full report of the year 1930" – "that the report do contain facts and figures relating to the Civil Disobedience movement".

measure for reform he wanted them to spend their time in the villages learning about local customs which, he thought, would make them understand that legal changes were irrelevant for most rural women.<sup>260</sup>

During the 1937 elections most of the followers of Gandhi came out successful. But the more striking triumph was that among his disciples who were elected was a woman – Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who was chosen to represent her constituents in the United Provinces Assembly. Vijaya Lakshmi told the press, “There are fifty-five of our women in high positions – more than in any other land!”<sup>261</sup>

Gandhi was arrested on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1942. The Quit India movement which followed was leaderless and not properly organized since all senior members of the Congress working committee were immediately arrested. As news of their arrests spread, spontaneous demonstrations broke out and women were quick to respond to Gandhi’s call. They took out processions, held meetings and demonstrations and organized strikes in schools and colleges. Young girls and old women showed remarkable courage in giving shelter to men under warrants of arrest. Women in different towns and villages organized *prabhat pheris*, picketed outside

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<sup>260</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *op. cit.*, p.115

<sup>261</sup> Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit quoted in Eleanor Morton, *op. cit.*, p.302

Government offices, schools and colleges.<sup>262</sup> Women's participation in the Quit India movement was much bolder, more spontaneous and unstructured than in the previous agitation.<sup>263</sup>

There were several criticism regarding the work assigned to women by Gandhi. Even though Gandhi as a social reformer was against the Purdah system the duties which he assigned women were such that to confine them within the four walls of their home.

While on the other hand a demand was being made to abolish purdah, on the other, a tacit recognition was being given to the system by laying stress on activities centering on charka. This was an activity which could be carried on in the home.

One important factor which succeeded in mobilizing women was that the entire programme of Gandhi was such that it did not challenge the traditional patriarchal family structure. Political participation was not to be at the cost of domestic duties. Service to her husband, family and country were a woman's primary duty. Men, therefore, did not perceive Gandhi's appeal to women to join his movement as a threat to their dominance within the family. He was trying to use the Indian Woman's

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<sup>262</sup> Aparna Basu, *op. cit.*, p.13

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

traditional role and qualities and in the political sphere also. Indian woman was used to sacrificing for her husband, her children, her family; now she was asked to suffer and sacrifice for her country as well.<sup>264</sup>

Another factor was Gandhi's personal charisma. According to Alice Thorner, "The broadening of women's vistas through the active role they took in the mass struggles of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s has been often related and attributed primarily to the charisma of Gandhi."<sup>265</sup> The entire principles of Gandhi such as Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Swadeshi and Sarvodaya were suitable to women. He gave importance to moral courage than physical prowess.

Gandhi's attempt had been to broaden the base of the Indian National Movement and to bring the hitherto uninvolved elements in to the political forefront. As a part of his programme of mass mobilization Gandhi decided to mobilize the women. And he succeeded in mobilizing them. It was undoubtedly Gandhi who gave them inspiration, assurance and support. By involving the women in programmes of national

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<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14

<sup>265</sup> See Preface by Alice Thorner in Alice Thorner and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, (ed.), *Ideals, Images and Real Lives – Women in Literature and History*, , Orient Longman limited, Mumbai, 2000, p. vi

development, Gandhi increased their efficacy. Despite the drawbacks, his contribution was indeed unique. Gandhi had generated a pride and a passionate involvement in winning Swaraj and the *abala* strode ahead with confident self-reliance.<sup>266</sup> Gandhi had opened a new world to the women of India. “Out of society girls, sheltered wives, cloistered students, out of plain working girls, out of a princess, he made leaders for new India. He demanded greatness of them and they found it in themselves – because of the need for greatness in them.”<sup>267</sup>

Even though Gandhi considered Harijans and women as the most downtrodden section of the society he was of the opinion that women should themselves take up the leadership of their movements instead of expecting men to do that. But in the case of Harijans he asked the upper class to provide the leadership to the Harijan upliftment movements.

Even though he tried to emancipate the women from her shackles his activities are not without an limitation. Madhu Kishwar says that Gandhi “tried changing women’s position without either transforming their relation to the outer world of production or the inner world of family,

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<sup>266</sup> Uma Rao, ‘Women in the Frontline: The case of UP’ in Leelat Kasturi and Veena Mazumdar, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.49

<sup>267</sup> Eleanor Morton, *op. cit.*, p.305

sexuality and reproduction”.<sup>268</sup> Moreover, “he saw male and female in terms of the ‘active-passive’ complementary which has been an important ideological device for denying women any chance to acquire power and decision – making ability in the family and in society.”<sup>269</sup> She considers the importance ascribed to morality tan condition of women “reflects the age-old patriarchal bias”.<sup>270</sup>

Sujata Patel says Gandhi failed to understand the reasons for the weakness of the women. He perceived women’s problem as an extension of the national question.<sup>271</sup> But she herself contradicts it by saying the “Gandhi is the figure of that historical moment and his ideas on women show very clearly his intense involvement in the making of the history and design for that time.”<sup>272</sup>

Tanika Sarkar says “if the goal of colonial exploitation is a ruinous drain of wealth and if the central purpose of the patriotic struggle is to reverse its flow, if freedom means, above all, the reappropriation of one’s own fortunes, possibilities and destiny, then the woman occupied a strategic position within the scheme with her ancient skill which would

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<sup>268</sup> Madhu Kishwar, *op. cit.*, p.1699

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1691

<sup>271</sup> Sujata Patel, *op. cit.*,p.381

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p.378

liberate Indian from the expensive, futile and ultimately fatal trap of western cure which kills rather than heals.”<sup>273</sup> She is also of the opinion that “Through their special role at the charka and with boycott, women assumed a centrality within the nationalist enterprise. Other forms of the enterprise sustained this centrality.”<sup>274</sup>

Gandhi succeeded in making the women participate in the political movements and he was far more successful than his predecessors in this. They only attempted to make changes in the status of women. But Gandhi brought them to the political sphere. “Though the traditional roles of women were not challenged, women discovered their potential and strength as they became involved in the freedom struggle. They learned from Gandhiji that the weak could be strong and inner strength was more powerful than brute force.”<sup>275</sup> Often the spinning programme which he assigned to women met with much criticism. But the tremendous change that brought about in the life of women was a remarkable achievement of Gandhi. “It seems definite that if here had been no Gandhi in India,

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<sup>273</sup> Tanika Sarkar, ‘Nationalist Iconography: Image of women in 19th century Bengali Literature’, in Alice Thorner, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.168

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169

<sup>275</sup> Usha Thakkar, ‘Maniben Nanavati : Spinning the Yarn of Freedom’, in Nawaz B. Mody edited, *Women in India’s Freedom Struggle*, Allied Publishers Ltd. Mumbai, 2000, p.117

progress of Indian women would have been very slow.”<sup>276</sup> What make Gandhi different from others that he “saw women not as recipients of male favour but as potential agents for regenerating Indian society. By investing well-known mythological symbols with new meanings he turned the frailties of women into sources of strength and moral courage”.<sup>277</sup>

Gandhi’s movement did not assume aggressively feminine postures. Here the goal was national freedom and it had none of the man-woman antagonism. Moreover men were its staunch supporters.<sup>278</sup> Women were now conscious of their strength. “What social reformers had been struggling to achieve over half a century, Gandhiji did almost overnight. The status of women was completely transformed, for in life there is rarely a going back. The women of today carry themselves with new dignity and consciousness of their larger responsibilities.”<sup>279</sup> Sucheta Kripalani says that “Many a leader and reformer has espoused the cause of woman in this country but none held women in such high esteem as did the Father of the Nation. With infinite compassion and love he held us by

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<sup>276</sup> Radha Krishna Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 54

<sup>277</sup> Maithreyi Krishnaraj, ‘Permeable Boundaries’ in Alice Thorner and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.28

<sup>278</sup> Aloo J. Dastur and Usha H. Mehta, *Gandhi’s Contribution To The Emanacipation of Women*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1991, p.48

<sup>279</sup> Kamaldevi Chattopadiya, ‘What Gandhiji has done for women’ in *What Gandhiji Has Done For Inida*, Ilami Makz, YMCA, Lahore, 1946, p.69

the hand and led us forward to our rightful place in society.”<sup>280</sup> Gandhi thus, through his unique methods achieved what other social reformers of India failed to achieve.

What made Gandhi unique from other social reformers that he tried to bring women in to the political activities and made them aware about the political activities. He made them to participate in the movements organized by him. He even made the illiterate and ignorant rural women also participate in the movement. Along with political movement he tried to effect certain changes in the social conditions of the women also. Not only as a political leader but also as a social emancipator he led them. And while making the changes he kept in view of the realities of Indian condition. That made him unique from other political leaders and social reformers as well.

Gandhi was very well aware of the fact that only a well organized and united movement could erode the legitimacy of the British rule in India. His constant effort to broaden the mass base of the movement was largely successful. His efforts to mobilize and secure the support of the Muslims for the National Movement was not completely successful except for the Non-cooperation movement. His Harijan upliftment

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<sup>280</sup> Sucheta Kripalani, *op. cit.*, p. 50

movement along with eradicating some social evils helped in making them participate. He succeeded in emancipating the Indian women to a large extent. He assigned them certain programmes through which he involved them in political activities. It was his effort to politically mobilize these social groups which gave the National Movement a true national colour.

## CONCLUSION

When Gandhi entered the Indian political scene he was well established as a leader of the Indian community in South Africa. There he succeeded in welding the different sections of Indians into one and united community. There also he had to deal with the British government. Still in 1915 he was impressed by the British sense of justice and believed that the British would listen to Indian demands which were 'just'. At that time he was ready to cooperate with the British government.

It was in 1915 that Gandhi entered the Indian political scene. It was during this period that Gokhale predicted, "this man is going to play a great part in the future history of India.....There is something in him which at once enchains the attention of the poor man and he establishes, with a rapidity which is his own, his affinity, with the lowly and the distressed. ...."<sup>1</sup>

It was the Indian National Congress which led the Indian National Movement. But it was only a middle-class organization without a mass base at that time. It remained more as a forum for debate than as an instrument of action. It was characterized by the ideology of Moderates

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<sup>1</sup> *Aruna Asaf Ali Papers, 198, (LXXXV), NMML*

under the leadership of Gopala Krishna Gokhale and the ideology of Extremists under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. They bequeathed to Gandhi their views on the nature and method of protest in the colonial state. Gandhi made a critical borrowing from them and continuously improvised upon them to make the protest against the colonial regime more effective.

The early Indian Nationalists had much faith in the British rule. This made them follow the path of constitutionalism. Gandhi by the late 1920s lost all such faith and so he abandoned the path of constitutionalism. He had much faith in the masses and he believed that masses are the ultimate source of power. The constitutional method adopted by the Congress during these years did not make the leaders of the Congress feel the necessity of the mass support. The westernized elite which controlled the Congress were not for mobilizations of the masses yet. British repression made the Extremists methods ineffective. Colonial power tried to seek the support of the Moderates with small concessions and reforms. Masses remained largely inert with no part to play in the movement.<sup>2</sup> But Gandhian technique of non cooperation needed mass participation for its success. His methods were not in tune with the

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to suggest that masses were not mobilized at all. But such mobilizations remained confined to some regions and that too for specific periods.

prevalent methods of the Congress. In stark contrast to the politics of the early Congress which were accessible only to the highly educated and the English speaking Gandhi's campaign incorporated all sections of the population. He brought about qualitative changes in Indian politics by changing the national movement from a middle class movement to a mass movement. His style of politics bewildered some of the Congress leaders of the time as well as the British government.

Gandhi constantly tried to broaden the mass base of the Indian National Movement. He became successful in drawing the masses to the political forefront. This aspect of movement did not get much attention from the historians.

The political strategy that Gandhi evolved was conditioned by and suited to a semi-hegemonic state like colonial India. The British who took India by force consolidated their in India by adopting some measures to collaborate the native people. But the introduction of rule of law, western education and representative institutions etc. they established their legitimacy in India. Gandhi's effort was to erode this legitimacy by withdrawing the consent of the masses to the colonial authority.

Gandhi entered the Indian politics by involving in some local disputes in which he experimented his method of Satyagraha. The Champaran, Kheda, and Ahmedabad struggles gave him an idea about the nature of political movement that existed in India and also the nature of the government that he had to deal with. The Rowlatt Satyagraha gave him an idea about the importance of organizing separate classes into a united whole. It also made him understand the necessity of organizing different sections of the society on non-violent methods and also educating and training them on the lines of his Satyagraha before launching a nation-wide movement. Rowlatt Satyagraha carried home the lesson that by disregarding the public opinion government cannot rule.

Even though Gandhi organized all these movements by remaining outside the Congress he organized No cooperation Movement of 1920 through the Congress. In 1920 Gandhi introduced some reforms in the organizational set up of the Indian National Congress. He organized it up to the village level. He brought under it the service of 7, 00,000 Indian villages.<sup>3</sup> Thus he made Congress a genuine all-India organization. Congress now represented the Indian villages also. Through this he extended his own power base also. Previously, Congress's power base

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<sup>3</sup> Gopinath Dhawan, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1957, p.175

was limited to Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. It now extended to other parts of the country, even going to the interior villages.

Gandhi tried to identify himself with the masses. He tried to identify himself with the common people. The works he had done in Champaran and Kheda made him an acceptable leader of the peasants. Along with the participation of the peasantry and labourers he also ensured the participation of the bourgeoisie. In the wider political context of an anti-imperialist movement he negated the idea of class-war. By incorporating the Khilafat issue and the Punjab issue to the Non Cooperation Movement he got the support of the Congress as well as the Indian Muslims.

Gandhi had withdrawn the Non Cooperation movement when it was at its low ebb. Swarajists decided to participate in constitutional activities. He noticed that he could not control the actions of the Swarajya Party within the Councils. So he went direct to the masses and started a vigorous campaign for improving their condition. The constructive programme was designed for this. Gandhi now seriously attempted to mobilize the Dalits and Women. He insisted on Khadi work, removal of untouchability, prohibition work etc. As a result "Due to the stimulus of Mahatmaji's work in the towns and villages of India, several people

joined the Congress and they became the members of Municipalities and Unions. Thus the Congress formed the majority in most of these local bodies.”<sup>4</sup>

It was on the issue of the Salt tax that Gandhi organized his next important movement – the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930s. The issue of salt did not alienate the Congress Moderates. It had a widespread popular concern which helped in mobilizing a mass following. It had no divisive potential. It enabled participation by different sections of the society. Large-scale participation of women was a notable feature of this movement. The movement really demonstrated the mass following of the Congress.

The two-fold programme of Boycott and Civil Disobedience had two-fold objective. The Boycott was directed against the ignorance and selfishness of the British public and the Civil Disobedience was directed against the arrogance and political stupidity of the Bureaucracy.<sup>5</sup> Civil Disobedience came to an end with the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> *INA Papers F. No. 294/INA II & III*, NAI

<sup>5</sup> Statement issued by C. Raja Gopalachari, *History of Freedom Movement Papers, III Phase, Region VIII 35/3*, NAI

<sup>6</sup> The political movement had indeed really disappeared before the agreement between the Viceroy and Gandhi. *Home Political F. No.33/I K.W*, NAI

movement which later resumed sauntered on for two years and came to an end in 1934. Gandhi now turned his attention to Constructive Programme.

Gandhi worked at two levels. He worked with the Congress and also through his Constructive Programme. His strategy was based on a specific technique. Gandhi had shown an amazing degree of adaptability. He took up immediate issues at stake to organize the masses around it and through the specific issues he questioned the existence of the colonial authority. His non cooperation and civil disobedience movements questioned the hegemony of the British power in India. His method was to slowly erode British hegemony. So he did not make 'unreasonable' demands. Except during the Quit India movement complete independence was not made the immediate demand.

Gandhi launched a movement only when he felt that the people were enthusiastic to participate in it. He always left space for communication with the opponent before launching a movement. He made compromises or changed his arena from active politics to constructive programme when he felt that the movement had lost its momentum or when people began to move back from the agitational front. Gandhi had no intention to withdraw from the politics permanently. His withdrawals from the political forefront were only temporary. During

these interludes he strengthened his position by social activities. This happened throughout the Indian National Movement, from 1920 to 47.

Constructive work was also a part of Gandhian politics. It has to be viewed as a synthetic whole. If we put exclusive emphasis on his politics disregarding constructive programme then his strategy and politics would not make any sense. At the same time constructive programme was not devoid of politics. Politics of the constructive programme was to contain class conflicts and to an extent it was limited within the framework of bourgeois interests. No large scale economic reforms were aimed at. This was the case of Harijan upliftment movement and his programmes to mobilize peasants and labourers. His programmes were aimed at social amelioration.<sup>7</sup> But we have to take into consideration the change in his attitude during the later stages especially his attitude towards the peasant occupation of the cultivating lands of landlords and also changes that he made in the trusteeship formula under the influence of the Socialists. The point is that Gandhi always evolved; his attitudes were not rigid and static.

His constructive programme did some damage to the British economic interests. The constructive programme of prohibition created

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<sup>7</sup> At the same time he was not rigid and was ready to change.

financial crisis for the government. The governments in various provinces, driven by financial crisis were tried other methods to get the maximum revenue. "The Bombay Government is increasing shops. The Behar Government had lessened the price of liquor and the Assam Government that of Bhang. The U.P. Government has taken back to the vicious auction system rejected by it once."<sup>8</sup>

Gandhi used tradition to create an alternative political programme. He used the Hindu-Jain tradition of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) and 'Satya' (truth) in evolving his political programmes. Even though he depended on Jain, Buddhist and Hindu tradition for developing his methods to mobilizing the masses he reinterpreted it on the light of the circumstances in which he applied it. He radicalized religion, integrated it with modern aspirations.<sup>9</sup> This was largely true in organizing the Harijans and Women. "To appeal to the passions and emotions of the masses he secured for himself the status of a religio-political leader."<sup>10</sup> While communicating his ideas to the masses he used terms from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Upanishad and he avoided any reference to Western ideas. He always emphasized his idea of establishing Rama Rajya. But

<sup>8</sup> AICC, F. No. 12/1932, NMML

<sup>9</sup> Avijit Pathak, 'Gandhi and Dilemmas of Contemporary Politics', *Mainstream*, December, 30, 1989, p.21

<sup>10</sup> S. Jafar Raza Bilgrami, 'Gandhi and Jinnah', in *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Vol. X, No.1, 1970-71, p.23

this had a danger: it tended to alienate orthodox Muslims from him and his movements.

What make Gandhi unique when compared to early nationalists was that he developed a strategy which successfully mobilized a larger section of the population and made them participate in the national movement. The activities of the early Indian nationalists was confined to the small westernized group and expressed in their terms. Compared to other early nationalists Tilak had more mass appeal but it was confined to a particular area. Gandhi succeeded in creating an image of an all India leader. And he identified himself with the masses. He created a cohesive political community out of the inert masses. It was his mass appeal that made Gandhi successful. It was not because of his charisma but because of the utility and practicability of a non violent technique that gave Gandhi such an influence in the politics of that time. Gandhian attempts to mobilize the various sections against the imperialist power became successful and these people readily participated in the movement at his call. Though he was not the first, it was Gandhi who brought the peasants in large numbers to the national movement. His technique was designed to constantly enlarge the mass base of the movement. This was by mobilizing different sections like Women, Muslims, Dalits and others. We

have discussed this in the third and the fourth chapter of the thesis. He was successful to a great extent in his endeavour to widen the mass base of the movement. However except for the Non cooperation movement he failed to gain the support of a sizeable section of the Muslims. But this has to be explained in terms of the British policy of divide and rule, the growth of communalism etc. and not in terms of a failure of Gandhian strategy.

For the purpose of organizing a mass movement Gandhi tried to put much emphasis on the class conciliation. As we have seen in the third chapter he totally rejected the notion of class struggles put forward by the leftists. For him the necessary and important struggle that had to be waged was the anti-imperialist struggle. His attempt was to organize the masses in order to question the hegemony of the colonial power. His programmes were designed to forge a broad united front against the colonial power. Gandhian techniques were equally against strife and internal conflicts. Gandhi deferred class revolution for the sake of achieving independence. Through his methods he tried to make the country fit for freedom though not for socialism<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> It is not accidental that India chose the capitalist path of development after 1947.

Even though the leftists and the revolutionary terrorists also had their own programmes to mobilize masses they were not successful in their task. The reason for this was that Gandhi adopted a method of struggle which was suitable to the prevalent conditions in India. We do not make any claim that mass mobilization was possible only through the Gandhian methods. Kerala provide an example of a different kind of mobilization. In Kerala, mass mobilization took place based on class struggles and without Gandhism. Here it was the leftists who undertook the task of mobilizing the masses. But again we are not suggesting that the 'Kerala path'<sup>12</sup> is applicable to the whole India. Kerala had its own specific conditions and we believe that these were crucial in the leftist success.<sup>13</sup> It shows the complexities and possibilities that existed within the national movement.

An important aspect of Gandhian technique was the importance given to non violence. He transformed the principles of non violent resistance into a successful instrument for achieving liberty. "What was

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<sup>12</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47, Vol. II 1934-41*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p.291. For a criticism of this position see K. Gopalankutty, 'The Task of Transforming the Congress: Malabar, 1934-40', in *Studies in History*, Vol. V. No.2, July-December, 1989

<sup>13</sup> We intend to take this problem for further study later.

once just a personal discipline, he elevated into a social technique for community or national emancipation.”<sup>14</sup>

The advocates of nonviolence conceived power not in the conventional manner. According to them the power was vested in the masses. Non violence works at the sources of power rather than at the outcomes of power.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, it would be wrong to pose the question as binary opposites: violence – non violence. Gandhian non-violent struggles were potentially violent. What Gandhian methods intended was not complete non violence. Complete non violence was not possible in a mass movement. Gandhi never placed non-violence as a creed before the nation. He wrote in *Harijan* that “if I had started non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself. Imperfect as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an uncharted ocean. Thank god that, though the boat has not reached its haven, it has proved fairly storm proof.”<sup>16</sup>

Late in 1947 Gandhi who was worried over the communal tensions in the country wrote that “I have realized that although our 30 years

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<sup>14</sup> Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay in S. Radhakrishnan, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay et. al., *Mahatma Gandhi and One World*, Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1994 (reprint), p.12

<sup>15</sup> Michael J. Nojeim, *Gandhi and King: The Power of Nonviolent Resistance*, Praeger Publishers, 2005, p.29

<sup>16</sup> *Harijan*, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1942

struggle could be called non-violent, it was not founded on non-violence and so it ought not to have been so called.”<sup>17</sup> The adoption of non violent method of struggle was a political act to deal with a particular political situation. This was why he did not condemn the ‘violence’ associated with the Quit India Movement.

Gandhi developed his theory out of his experiences in South Africa and India. In both place he had to deal with the British government. Britishers followed liberal principles in India though in a limited sense. This was not the case of Hitler’s Germany. Gandhi’s methods were depended on the context in which it is applied for its success. It may not be possible for a non violent civil resistance to withstand the ruthless repression of a fascist regime. However Gandhi was convinced of its efficacy and recommended it to the Jews in their resistance to Nazism in Germany.<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note that Gandhi who recommended non-violent method for the Jews did not consider Polish armed resistance against Hitler’s invasion of their country as an act of violence. Gandhi argued that “If ten soldiers resist a force of a thousand soldiers armed cap-a-pie, the

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<sup>17</sup> Letter to Kishorelal G. Mashruwala dated 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1947, *CWMG* Vol. 96, p.97

<sup>18</sup> *CWMG*, Vol.74, pp.239-42, *Harijan*, 26-11-1938

former are almost non-violent, because there is no capacity for any thing like proportionate violence in them.”<sup>19</sup> The reason for this Gandhi said was that “The Poles knew that they would be crushed to atoms, and yet they resisted the German hordes. That was why I called it almost non-violence.”<sup>20</sup>

In the post Second World War era ‘non violent’ struggles made decisive contributions to the liberation of Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia from Communist tyranny, as well as to the collapse of earlier dictatorships.<sup>21</sup> The movement against Apartheid in South Africa was also largely non violent. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States also adopted non violence.

We believe that Gandhian method of non violent struggles would be successful in liberal democratic states. A good example of this was the Civil Rights Movement in America. Martin Luther King who led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America got his inspiration from the non violent method that Gandhi employed in India. Influence of Gandhian Ahimsa reflects in the words of King when he challenged the

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<sup>19</sup> CWMG, Vol.79. p.173, *Harijan*, 8-9-1940

<sup>20</sup> CWMG, Vol. 79, p. 174, *Harijan*, 8-9-1940

<sup>21</sup> Gene Sharp and Bruce Jenkins, ‘The Power Potential of Nonviolent Struggle’, *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, July – December, 1996, p.24

white oppression saying that “we will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure it”.<sup>22</sup> Even though lot of people abroad have pursued a self-conscious Gandhian politics it was King who embodied Gandhian principles and translated them in to action.<sup>23</sup>

In Africa too there were countries which followed non violent struggle. In the words of Julius K. Nyerere “many of us in Africa applied non violence in the struggle for the independence of our counties, and in Tanzania we were able to achieve independence without resort to violence”.<sup>24</sup> The African National Congress leaders adopted the policy of non violent resistance. But when they found that they could not sustain the policy of non-violence they decided to turn to and support an armed struggle.

Gandhi represented the needs of his time. His strategy was suited to the nature of a semi-hegemonic state that existed in colonial India. So the applicability of Gandhism or the techniques Gandhi employed during the National Movement in any other situation needs an evaluation of the conditions prevalent there.

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther King quoted in Ashakant Nimbark, ‘Gandhism Re-examined’, *Social Research*, Vol.31, No.1, 1964, p.121

<sup>23</sup> Ronal J. Terchek, *Gandhi Struggling for Autonomy*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p.204

<sup>24</sup> Julius K. Nyerere, ‘Gandhi Spells Nonviolence – Total, Uncompromising Nonviolence’, *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, April – June, 1996, p.10

Gandhism was never tried in India in the sense Gandhi wished to. Nor do we want to conclude that Gandhism has failed in independent India. By placing Gandhi in highest position of Father of the Nation, what Congress has done was to completely ignore his principles. It does not mean that whatever Gandhi had cherished was good for a modern Indian society. The practicability of the Trusteeship formula itself has to be reexamined for that. But many of the critics who disagreed with Gandhi later accepted his principles especially his theory of decentralization. It was better to conclude that his techniques and programmes were developed to meet the immediate social and political needs the success of which depended on the context in which it was applied.

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