Chapter Five

GANDHISM AND THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) entered the Indian political scene as a prominent figure only in 1916; but by 1919 he emerged as the most important national leader. His writings and speeches of this period and of the subsequent years cover many subjects such as non-cooperation, training for self-government, modern civilization, concept of Swadeshi, non-violence as a dogma, policy and principle, passive resistance and soul-force, Hindu-Muslim unity, economics of cottage industries and benefits of an indigenous system of education. His views on all these subjects were a part of his total philosophy which was often referred to as Gandhism. In this study we are concerned only with his political philosophy and that too of the period prior to 1922. In politics, as in regard to other matters, he was making experiments. By making a study of the political activities prior to 1922 we get only a glimpse of his political philosophy which evolved later. But in the history of India's struggle for freedom the non-cooperation movement which the Indian National Congress launched under Gandhi's leadership during 1920-21 was a landmark and in the period which we are covering in this study, i.e., 1905-1921, it came as a climax to all other earlier political movements.
Gandhi's emergence as the National Leader

Gandhi was not associated with the political movements of India before 1918. After a long period of residence in the Union of South Africa he returned to India in 1915. In that country he experimented with satyagraha - literally meaning the pursuit of truth - in connection with the passive resistance which he organized against racial discrimination practised against the 'non-whites.' (1) The reports of his campaigns in South Africa reached India and earned him a high reputation among his countrymen for courage and selfless work. Immediately after his return to this country Gandhi did not enter active politics, but tried to make a study of the Indian political situation.

In 1915 there was a lull in the political life of the country. As the partition of Bengal was annulled, there was no tension concerning it. The struggle between the Moderates and the Extremists for the leadership of the national movement had weakened the Congress from which the Extremists had gone out. Neither the Moderates nor the Extremists were in a position to assert themselves as national leaders. Another political party, which was gradually emerging as a force, was the Muslim League which strengthened the separatist trends among the Indian Muslims.

(1) An exhaustive account of the work of Gandhi in the Union of South Africa is given by H. S. L. Polak in M. K. Gandhi Speeches and Writings (Madras, 1917).
The task of a national leader under such circumstances was to initiate a movement which could be national in its real sense and the philosophy of which could assimilate the fundamental tenets of the various political groups inside the country, thereby making it acceptable to a considerable section of the people. For the success of such a movement it was necessary that it should be designed - consciously or unconsciously - to satisfy diverse groups with conflicting ideas and even clashing interests. Gandhi achieved success to a remarkable extent in performing this Herculean task.

We see in his writings and speeches the liberalism and the economic content of the philosophy of the Moderates, the political radicalism and religious outlook which characterized the Extremists and a readiness to accept the orthodox Muslim's interpretation of the events concerning Turkey and Arabia. One can also see the traces of the influence of the Home Rule League movements led by Annie Besant in the political agitation led by Gandhi during 1919-1920. (2) While, on the one hand, Gandhi was trying to combine the various strands of

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(2) Mrs. Besant was interned under the Defence of India Rules in June 1917 and her arrest created widespread resentment against the Government in the country.
thought which influenced the people before he appeared on the Indian political field, on the other, he was opening a new chapter in modern India's political history when he led and organized the non-cooperation movement of 1920-21. As the first campaign of mass civil disobedience against the alien Government on a national scale, it set in motion new political forces in the country.

Before Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement he had added to his rich experience of conducting such a movement in South Africa by associating himself with the agitations in Champaran (3) and Kaira. (4) They were local struggles concerned with local issues. The movement of 1920-21 was concerned with issues of national importance and as such it raised some fundamental issues.

**Immediate causes for the Non-Cooperation Movement**

As we noted earlier, in one sense the non-cooperation movement was the climax of earlier movements. There were also some immediate causes for it being launched in 1919 and for the shape it took at that time. Most prominent among them were the Rowlatt Act, the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy and the Khilafat

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(4) The story of the movement in Kaira - a district in Gujerat - has been described by Gandhi himself in a speech delivered in Bombay in 1918. Gandhi, n. 1, 279-81.
agitation. As a result of these developments and the impact of the war and of other international developments the political situation in the country was ripe for starting a campaign against the alien government.

During the world war of 1914-1918, the politically conscious section of the people of the country gave unconditional support to the war efforts of the Government and hoped that, after the war, the people of India would move towards self-government rapidly. As one of Gandhi's followers, who later became a prominent political leader, noted:

The war aims which were declared to be nothing less than making the world safe for democracy, the protection of weak nationalities, and the conferment of the boon of self-determination on all peoples naturally roused great hopes in the minds of the people of India who began to see in the world-devastating war a chance of their deliverance from the humiliating position of a subject people and a hope of the elevation of their country to the status of an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. (5)

But after the war those who hoped that India would move rapidly towards self-government were disappointed. Many events such as the arrest of some of their leaders gave a rude shock to them. They were further agitated by the report of the Committee, headed by Sir Sydney Rowlatt, which investigated the revolutionary movements in the country and suggested how the Government should meet it.

(5) Rajendra Prasad in M. K. Gandhi, Young India 1919-22 (Madras, 1922) xxv-xxvi.
The Report which was published on 19 July 1918 recommended the continuation of all the provisions of the Defence of India Act which, in practice, meant the denial of civil rights and liberties to the people. The Defence of India Act was not very much resented during the war because it was a temporary measure intended to deal with an extraordinary situation. The Bills, based on the Report of the Rowlatt, were meant to make a permanent change in the criminal law of the land. These Bills were brought forward before the Imperial Legislature on 6 February 1919. Gandhi not only condemned the Bills in an outright manner, but also warned the British Government that the nation as such was not going to abide by any act which would deny civil rights. He stated:

When the Rowlatt Bills were published, I felt that they were so restrictive of human liberty that they must be resisted to the utmost. I observed too that the opposition to them was universal among Indians. I submit that no State, however despotic, has the right to enact laws which are repugnant to the whole body of the people, much less a government guided by constitutional usage and precedent such as the Indian Government. (6)

Notwithstanding the public agitation and the opposition from the non-official members of the Legislature, the Bills were enacted with the support of the official majority. Commenting on the Government's decision, Gandhi said:

If my occasional resistance be a lighted match, the Rowlatt Legislation and the persistence in retaining it on the statute book is a thousand matches scattered throughout India. The only way to avoid civic resistance altogether is to withdraw that legislation. (7)

Gandhi's criticism of this arbitrary measure was in line with the liberal thinking of the Moderates, but his programme of protesting against it was far from being liberal.

Implementation of Gandhi's programme to protest against the Rowlatt Act led to another important development - the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy - which was another reason for launching the non-cooperation movement in 1919. On 23 March 1919 Gandhi appealed to the people to observe 6 April as an all-India Hartal, to demonstrate resentment of the people against the Rowlatt Act. The Hartal was very successful. Later many meetings were held in different parts of the country and in the Punjab a few minor riots also took place. The Government of the Punjab, which was headed by Sir Michael O'Dwyer took strong action against the popular leaders who organized protest meetings in that province. Gandhi was served with an order not to enter the Punjab. When he refused to comply with it he was arrested. Dr. Kitchlew and Satyapal, two popular leaders of the province, were later arrested. There were also firing at the demonstrators. There was high tension in the Punjab and on 13 April 1919 it reached a climax.

(7) D. G. Tendulkar, n. 3, 320.
On that day a meeting was held in the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. The following account gives the story of what was referred to as the Amritsar Massacre and the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy:

On the 13th a meeting was advertised to be held at a vacant space known as Jallianwala Bagh. General Dyer prohibited any gathering of men on pain of death and hearing that a meeting was going to be held at Jallianwala proceeded to the spot with his troops and machine guns. The place was full of men, women and children as it was an important Hindu festival day. Within 30 seconds of his arrival he opened fire which continued for 10 minutes directing it where the crowd was thickest. The fire continued till ammunition was exhausted. Some 5 to 6 hundred people were killed outright and three times the number wounded. The place being surrounded on all sides by high walls no one could escape. There was no warning given before firing and no care taken of the dead and wounded after it. Subsequently, Martial law was declared in Amritsar, Lahore, Gujrat and Jyalpur districts and what may be fitly described as a reign of terror followed. (8)

No other single incident in the history of modern India caused as much dissatisfaction against the Government as the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. Even the Government was compelled to yield to the public demand to enquire into the justness and propriety of the police firing and a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Hunter was appointed for the purpose. But before the Committee began its proceedings, the Government passed an Indemnity Act for the protection of its officers. The Hunter Committee was divided in its findings and its report failed to satisfy Indian public opinion. All these developments

(8) Rajendra Prasad, n. 5, xxxi-xxxii.
related to the Amritsar firing added a stimulus to the non-cooperation movement when it was launched later.

We have dealt with many aspects of the Khilafat question in the last chapter. The Khilafat agitation was another source of strength to the non-cooperation movement. The terms of the peace treaty with reference to the Khilafat were interpreted by many Indian Muslim leaders as a betrayal of the promise given by the British to them. The news of the Peace Treaty reached India on the same day when the Hunter Committee's Report was published. Both intensified the widespread discontent against the British Government.

In a letter to the Viceroy, Gandhi referred to the Khilafat and the Punjab question (the Amritsar firing) and explained in the following manner how they have changed his attitude towards the Government:

Events that have happened during the past month have confirmed me in the opinion that the Imperial Government have acted in the Khilafat matter in an unscrupulous, immoral and unjust manner and have been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend their immorality. I can retain neither respect, nor affection for such Government.

The attitude of the Imperial and Your Excellency's Government on the Punjab question has given me additional cause for grave dissatisfaction. ... Your Excellency's light-hearted treatment of the official crime, your exoneration of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Mr. Montagu's dispatch and, above all the shameful ignorance of the Punjab events and callous disregard of the feelings of Indians betrayed by the House of Lords, have filled me with the gravest misgivings regarding the future of the Empire,
have estranged me completely from the present Government and have disabled me from tendering, as I have hitherto tendered, my loyal co-operation. (9)

The Non-Cooperation Movement and its Programme

The stage was thus set for inaugurating a new political campaign in India. Although the events noted above gave immediate stimulus to the non-cooperation movement, there was no doubt that the movement itself was not only a protest against the Rowlatt Act, the Khilafat and the Amritsar firing, but an expression of the lack of faith in the justness of the British rule and of the consequent demand for Swaraj by Indians.

In his letter to the Viceroy, which was referred to earlier, Gandhi made his intention of starting the non-cooperation movement clear. He said:

In my humble opinion the ordinary method of agitating by way of petitions, deputations and the like is no remedy for moving to repentance a Government so hopelessly indifferent to the welfare of its charge as the Government of India has proved to be. . . . I have, therefore, ventured to suggest the remedy of Non-Cooperation which enables those who wish, to dissociate themselves from the Government and which, if it is unattended by violence and undertaken in an ordered manner, must compel it to retrace its steps and undo the wrongs committed. (10)

In the last chapter we have referred to the Khilafat agitation. The Khilafat Committee, which was concerned with it, accepted Gandhi's Non-Cooperation programme on 28 May 1920.

(9) Gandhi, n. 5, 219-20.  
(10) Ibid.
On 30 June there was a joint Hindu-Muslim Conference at Allahabad and it decided to resort to Non-Cooperation after giving a month's notice to the Viceroy. The 31st of August was observed as the Khilafat day. Maulana Shaukat Ali and M. K. Gandhi toured different parts of the country and tried to gather support for a programme of non-cooperation. When a special session of the Indian National Congress met in Calcutta in September 1920 and adopted a resolution favouring non-cooperation, the movement gathered momentum and strength. The annual session of the Congress which was held at Nagpur in the same year re-affirmed the resolution of non-violent non-cooperation passed at the Calcutta session. The programme of the non-cooperation movement revealed that its ultimate aim was the removal of the British rule in India and such specific slogans as the repeal of the Rowlatt Act and the redress of the Punjab grievances were meant to arouse the consciousness of the masses and gather support from them.

This was evident from the fact that the Indian National Congress in its resolution accepted by the session held in Calcutta in September 1920 declared: "... the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in the future is the establishment of Swarajya." (11) The Congress also maintained that there was "no course left for the people of India but to approve of and

(11) The Indian National Congress 1920-23 (Allahabad, 1924) 7.
adopt the policy of progressive, non-violent Non-co-operation inaugurated by Mr. Gandhi until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established." (12)

The next session of the Congress held in Nagpur in 1920 congratulated the nation upon the progress made until then in working the programme of non-cooperation. It also declared that the entire or any part of the scheme of non-violent non-cooperation, with the renunciation of the voluntary association with the present Government at one end and the refusal to pay taxes on the other, should be put in force at a time to be determined by either the Indian National Congress or the All India Congress Committee. To prepare the country for successful non-cooperation with the British Government the Congress suggested taking effective steps in that behalf by the boycott of the schools controlled by the Government and by the boycott of law courts by the lawyers and the litigants. In order to make India economically independent and self-contained, the Congress called upon the merchants and traders to carry out a gradual boycott of foreign trade relations and to encourage handspinning and handweaving. (13)

 Passive Resistance and Satyagraha

Such a programme envisaging non-cooperation with the authorities in many fields was an innovation in the Indian

(12) Ibid.
(13) Ibid., 29.
national movement. Gandhi, as the leader who inaugurated it, often explained its philosophical basis. In a statement read out at the Court during his trial, Gandhi said:

I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. . . . In my humble opinion, Non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good. (14)

Gandhi acknowledged his indebtedness to many great teachers and books as far as the evolution of the idea of non-cooperation with, and resistance to, evil is concerned. He was inspired by the philosophy of passive resistance evolved by others. To quote Gandhi himself:

It was the new Testament which really awakened me to the rightness and value of Passive Resistance. . . . The Bhagavad Gita deepened the impression and Tolstoi's 'The Kingdom of God is Within You' gave it permanent form. (15)

According to one of Gandhi's biographers, Ruskin and Thoreau have both had some share in forming his opinions. Ruskin's 'Crown of Wild Olive' being an especial favourite. Last, but not least, the Passive Resistance Movement in England with regard to education has proved an object lesson, not only to him but to his people, of singular force and interest. (16)

(14) Gandhi, n. 5, 1053.
(16) Ibid.
Gandhi's contribution in this field was that he tried to make the method of passive civil resistance work on a national scale.

His programme of action also went beyond the traditional passive resistance. Once he said:

The English expression 'Passive Resistance' hardly denotes the force about which I propose to write. But Satyagraha, i.e., truth-force, correctly conveys the meaning. Truth-force is soul-force and is the opposite of the force of arms. (17)

About its applicability he said:

It is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. (18)

In the words of Gandhi,

Passive resistance has been conceived and is regarded as the weapon of the weak. Whilst it avoids violence, being not open to the weak, it does not exclude its use if, in the opinion of the passive resister, the occasion demands it. (19)

Not so Satyagraha. It was not the weapon of the weak but of those who were more fearless and courageous than the soldiers in the battle field. Explaining this view Gandhi said:

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(17) Mahatma Gandhi, Speeches and Writings (Madras, 1929) 192.

(18) Ibid., 187.

(19) Gandhi, n. 5, 222.
Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration. (20)

Non-violence as a Dogma, Policy and Principle

To what extent was non-violence an essential feature of the programme of the non-cooperation movement? It is doubtful that many of Gandhi's followers and the Indian National Congress fully subscribed to Gandhi's ideas in regard to this matter. On the one hand the resolution of the Congress on Non-cooperation stated:

This Congress desires to lay emphasis on Non-violence being the integral part of the non-co-operation resolution and invites the attention of the people to the fact that Non-violence in word and deed is as essential between people themselves, as in respect of the Government. (21)

On the other hand it did not give an ethical reason for taking this stand but only maintained that "the spirit of violence is not only contrary to the growth of a true spirit of democracy, but actually retards the enforcement (if necessary) of the other stages of non-cooperation." (22)

(20) Gandhi, n. 5, 262.
(21) Indian National Congress, n. 11, 31.
(22) Ibid.
Maulana Muhammad Ali, who was a colleague of Gandhi, explaining his view on the question of the role of non-violence in politics said in 1923:

Warfare, according to the Quran, is an evil;... but persecution is a worse evil, and may be put down with the weapons of war. When persecution ceases, and every man is free to act with the sole motive of securing divine goodwill, warfare must cease. These are the limits of Violence in Islam, as I understand it, and I cannot go beyond these limits without infringing the Law of God. But I have agreed to work with Mahatma Gandhi, and our compact is that as long as I am associated with him I shall not resort to the use of force even for purposes of self-defence. And I have willingly entered into this compact because I think we can achieve victory without violence; that the use of violence for a nation of three hundred and twenty millions of people should be a matter of reproach to it. (23)

Many other followers of Gandhi - both Hindus and Muslims - shared Muhammad Ali's view that violence was justified under some circumstances, but there were some advantages in accepting non-violence as a tactics.

Gandhi was not entirely unaware of this fact even in 1920. He wrote:

I want India to recognise that she has a soul that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world. . . . However, being a practical man, I do not wait till India recognizes the practicability of the spiritual life in the political world. India considers herself to be powerless and paralysed before the machine-guns, the tanks and the aeroplanes of the English. And she takes up Non-cooperation out of her

(23) Afzal Iqbal, comp., and ed., Select Writings And Speeches of Maulana Mohammad Ali (Lahore, 1944) 279.
weakness. It must still serve the same purpose, namely, bring her delivery from the crushing weight of British injustice, if a sufficient number of people practise it. (24)

A large number of people practised it. But a few resorted to violence also. There were scattered incidents of violence throughout the non-cooperation movement. But when it led to a death of some policemen at Chauri Chaura in February 1922, Gandhi suspended the movement. He gave the following reasons:

The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index finger. It shows the way India may easily go, if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, re-arrange our programme and not think of starting mass Civil Disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained in spite of mass Civil Disobedience being started and in spite of Government provocation. (25)

Gandhi also hoped that by the suspension of the movement, "every Congressman or woman will not only not feel disappointed but he or she will feel relieved of the burden of unreality and of national sin." (26) But the fact that many were disappointed and were angry when they heard of the suspension of the movement, showed that they did not subscribe to Gandhi's ideas on non-violence.

(24) Gandhi, n. 5, 262.
(25) Ibid., 997.
(26) Ibid., 998.
The biographer of Pandit Motilal Nehru sums up the reaction of many of Gandhi's followers to the suspension of the movement in the following words:

These decisions were like a clap of thunder to the Mahatma's adherents. Probably no one was closer to him than his faithful secretary, Mahadev Desai; but even Desai wrote from Agra gaol (February 15th) that the shock had 'absolutely unhinged' him. Lajpat Rai addressed a circular letter to the Congress Working Committee in which he described Gandhi as 'one of the greatest men of all ages, all times and all countries. . . . Our defeat is in proportion to the greatness of our leader . . . Mahatmaji pitched his standard too high. . . . To change the heart of mobs in such a way as to make it impossible for them to indulge in such brutalities without changing the hearts of Governments, that rule over them is an impossibility. . . . In Lucknow gaol the reactions of the Nehrus were equally violent. Motilal was beside himself with anger, while his son vented his despair in a letter which Gandhi described 'as a freezing dose.' (27)

Many others who participated in the non-cooperation movement were more disillusioned than these leaders. It will not therefore, be wrong to conclude that the majority of those who participated in the non-cooperation movement did not owe allegiance to the concept of non-violent struggle as interpreted by Gandhi. They accepted it only as an expedient measure.

But it is equally significant that Gandhi continued to be the most important political leader of India even after his taking this decisive step which went against the dominant mood of the country. His ability to retain the leadership

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of the country can be partly attributed to his magnetic personality; but it is also due to the realization on the part of many people in the country that some degree of restraint on the part of the political agitators would be helpful to the success of the national movement. In this period Britain was a Great Power in the world and the British Government in India possessed overwhelming military strength. The participation of the Indian masses in the national movement was still in the rudimentary stage, except in some parts of the country. It was, therefore, necessary to make tactical withdrawals during the struggle for freedom. From this standpoint the suspension of the non-cooperation movement was not an unwise step. Making such withdrawals and the necessary compromise for the purpose was another legacy of the political movements led by Gandhi. But the reasons he gave for it were couched in metaphysical and ethical terms and were not accepted by the vast number of his followers. In the realm of ideas he did not, therefore, bequeath a liberal political philosophy although in the field of action he occasionally functioned as a liberal.

Boycott of Schools, Courts and Foreign Goods

Another item of the programme of non-cooperation which was at first accepted by many of Gandhi's followers but which was rejected by them later was the boycott of schools and courts. The annual session of the Congress which met at
Nagpur in 1920 called upon the students of the age of sixteen and above to withdraw without delay, irrespective of consequence, from institutions owned, aided or in any way controlled by Government and advised them to devote themselves to some special service in connection with the non-cooperation movement or to continue their education in national institutions. It also called upon lawyers to make greater efforts to suspend their practice and to devote their attention to national service including boycott of law courts by litigants and fellow lawyers and the settlement of disputes by private arbitration. There was also a call to give up the titles of honour given by the Government and to boycott legislative bodies. The official historian of the Congress later summed the response to these calls:

> The No-vote campaign had been a remarkable success. Less successful was the boycott of courts and colleges, though their prestige was greatly damaged. Numerous lawyers had left their profession throughout the country and thrown themselves heart and soul into the movement. An unexpected measure of response, however, was noticeable in the field of National Education. Though the number of students that non-cooperated was not large, there was an earnest move towards National Education. (28)

Even this claim regarding the success of the boycott of educational institutions was highly exaggerated. The reality was nearer to the following observation made by C. Y. Chintamani, a critic of the programme of Non-cooperation:

It was admitted in the Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee consisted of Congressmen that, so far as effort was directed to the weaning of students from Government schools and colleges, it has met with poor success, and that the majority of the students who had come out of Government schools were obliged to return gradually to their old schools; which does not appear exactly to support the claim later made in the report that the non-cooperation movement has destroyed the prestige of Government institutions. (29)

The boycott of courts was also not very successful. The number of lawyers who suspended practice in courts was insignificant compared to their full strength. Some of them went back to their profession later.

The successful boycott was the one concerned with foreign goods. Emphasizing the importance of this boycott Gandhi said:

India cannot be free so long as India voluntarily encourages or tolerates the economic drain which has been going on for the past century and a half. Boycott of foreign goods means no more and no less than boycott of foreign cloth. . . . India has the ability to manufacture all her cloth if her children will work for it. (30)

This boycott was connected with the "Swadeshi" movement which was aimed at promoting indigenous goods. Gandhi associated it with the development of cottage industries also. Referring to the success of Gandhi's programme in this field one of his followers wrote:

(29) C. Y. Chintamani, Indian Politics Since the Mutiny (Allahabad, 1947) 140.

(30) Gandhi, n. 5, 513.
In the matter of the organization of Swadeshi, the result achieved in popularising spinning wheels and the use of Khaddar (hand spun and hand woven cloth) has been marvellous. In homes which had altogether forgotten even the name of Charkha (spinning wheel) its musical hum can now be heard. It has invaded even the parlour of the rich, while it has given a source of livelihood to lakhs of poor women in the country. (31)

Although the success of the spinning wheel was spectacular, it was the growth of Indian industries, which used all the modern methods of production which led to the ultimate success of the Swadeshi movement.

While suspending the Non-Cooperation movement, the Working Committee of the Congress called upon all Congress organizations to concentrate their efforts on creating an atmosphere of non-violence and further strengthening the Congress organizations by improving the panchayats and national education institutions and by stimulating the use of spinning wheel and production of Khaddar. These aspects of the Congress programme were not as popular as those connected with non-cooperation and political campaigns. And even among those who used Khaddar many did so because it was a political uniform of the Congressmen and not because they had any faith in Gandhi's programme of cottage industries and spinning wheel.

Gandhi's Opposition to Modern Civilization

This gap between the thinking of Gandhi and that of a vast number of his political followers arose from the fact that

(31) Rajendra Prasad, n. 5, cxlv.
they did not agree with his approach towards modern civilization. In as early as 1908 Gandhi had thus made clear his understanding of the difference between Indian civilization and western civilization:

... the aim of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing it behoves on every lover of India to the old Indian civilization. (32)

Gandhi did not always make this distinction between Indian civilization and Western civilization; but he consistently maintained his opposition to 'modern civilization.' In a letter to a friend he wrote in 1909:

There is no impassable barrier between East and West. (2) There is no such thing as Western or European civilization, but there is a modern civilization which is purely material. (3) The people of Europe, before they were touched by modern civilization, had much in common with the people of the East; ... (4) It is not the British people who are ruling India, but it is modern civilization, through its railways, telegraph, telephone, and almost every invention which has been claimed to be a triumph of civilization. (5) Bombay, Calcutta and the other chief cities of India are the real plague-spots. (6) If British rule were replaced tomorrow by Indian rule based on modern methods, India would be no better, except that she would be able to retain some of the money that is drained away to England. ... (33)

Many of Gandhi's followers did not share these views of their leader. Their aim was obviously to establish a modern state

(33) Tendulker, n. 3, 129-30.
and society in India. The sense of direction of the Indian national movement in general, in spite of some deviations, was towards the fulfilment of the aspiration of the politically conscious people to make India modern in every sense of the term. A question may be asked: then why did they accept the leadership of Gandhi who rejected these aspirations? They did because Gandhi did not demand from his political followers unqualified allegiance to all his views. During the period of a struggle he did demand implicit obedience and discipline of the highest order in his ranks. But that was a different matter.

In this connection it is worth noting that Gandhi often referred to Gokhale as his political Guru (teacher) and Jawaharlal Nehru as his political heir and that both these leaders were far from being the champions of ancient civilization. They openly acclaimed the merits of modern civilization, acknowledged their indebtedness to the West and stated that their aim was to reorganize Indian society, economy and state on modern lines.

**Spiritual Basis of the Political Activity**

It is also doubtful that the vast number of Gandhi's political followers shared his views on "spiritualization of politics." Gandhi once said: "You and I have to act on the political platform from a spiritual side and if this is done,
we should then conquer the conqueror." (34) Gandhi maintained that the non-cooperation movement was "a struggle of good against evil and the force behind it was soul force." (35) It is in this context that Gandhi considered self-purification to be the first step in the political struggles. On one occasion he said:

I have found that we have not yet reached a conscious recognition of our national state. We have not had the discipline necessary for a realization of that state and venture to say that there is nothing so powerful as fasting and prayer that would give us the requisite discipline, spirit of self-sacrifice, humility and resoluteness of will without which there can be no real progress. (36)

Gandhi himself displayed a unique sense of self-discipline by his austere way of life and inspired others to make sacrifices for their country. In the type of struggle he conducted, in which an unarmed people was struggling to be free from a mighty imperial Power, Gandhi's appeal to austerity and self-discipline had some place. And perhaps the most effective way of enforcing austerity and self-discipline among the masses of the Indian people at that time was through such practices as prayer and fasting because of their association with religion in the minds of the people.

The immediate effects of Gandhi's statements connected with "modern and western civilizations" and "spiritualization

(34) Gandhi, n. 1, 211.
(35) Doke, n. 15, 89.
(36) Gandhi, n. 5, 58.
of politics" were to raise the pride of the people in their country and to give them some kind of spiritual stamina in the struggle for freedom from foreign rule. Some of the long-term effects of these aspects of Gandhian philosophy was the promotion of obscurantist thinking among some sections of the people. As some of the symbols Gandhi used had a greater appeal to the Hindus than to the Muslims, they also gave a "Hindu colour" to the national movement under his leadership. But during 1919-1920 they were not so obvious because of Gandhi's support to the Khilafat agitation and the decision of the majority of the Muslim leaders to support the non-cooperation movement.

For an Indigenous and Practical Scheme of Education

Although the call to boycott schools sponsored and supported by the Government did not meet with great success, some ideas of Gandhi on education did make an impact on the Indian mind. Gandhi said: "Education through English had created a wide gulf between the educated few and the masses. It had created gulf in the families also. An English educated man had no community of feelings and ideas with the ladies of the family." (37) According to Gandhi, the then existing system of education was undesirable on the following grounds:

(37) Gandhi, n. 1, 297-8.
It is based upon foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture. (2) It ignores the culture of the heart and the hand and confines itself simply to the head. (3) Real education is impossible through a foreign medium. (38)

Gandhi advocated the establishment of educational institutions which could stand as a "protest against the British injustice and as a vindication of national honour," which drew its "inspiration from the national ideals of a united India," and which stood for the "synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life, and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil." (39) In this respect Gandhi's ideas on education were similar to those of the Extremists.

But while the latter emphasized the importance of imparting technical education which would be necessary to facilitate the industrialization of India on a large scale, Gandhi ignored it. He focussed attention, in addition to religion, politics and history, on vocational training. The vocational training, which Gandhi envisaged, was suited to the economy of a pre-dominantly agricultural society in which cottage industries, but no heavy industries, fulfilled an important role.

Although his educational plans had these limitations, it must be said to his credit that his criticism of the

(38) Gandhi, n. 5, 386-7.
(39) Ibid., 384-5.
unrealistic and bookish system of education was justified. He maintained that the introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in after-life, if they choose, for earning a living. Such a system must make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour. (40)

Another aspect of Gandhi's thinking on this matter was his uncompromising opposition to the use of the foreign language as the medium of education. Enumerating its defects, he said:

Foreign medium has caused brain-fag, put an undue strain upon the nerves of our children, made them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought and disabled them for filtrating their learning to the family or the masses... The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars. (41)

This did not mean that condemnation of English language as such. Gandhi conceded that it has a role to play as a language of international commerce and diplomacy.

A Popular Base for the National Movement

Gandhi's views on such subjects as education and cottage industries were part of his total philosophy which was aimed at creating a decentralized and democratic society.

(40) Landhi, n. 5, 388.

(41) Ibid., 389.
in which the gulf between the minority of a few learned and rich people and majority of uneducated and poor people would not exist. He also realized that the influence of religious and other traditions on the masses of the people were very strong and that the implementation of any programme, which would not take into consideration those traditions, would become an isolated action on the part of a few leaders who belonged to a minority. So, unlike many other political leaders, he thought of new schemes of educational, social and economic development and related all of them to political agitation on the part of the masses of the people in a manner which was understandable to them and for the redress of such specific grievances as the Amritsar tragedy, Rowlatt Act and the Khilafat. The ultimate effect of some of his speeches and writings and his first programme of non-cooperation was to give a popular base to the Indian national movement. Although Gandhi did not quote from the writings of European political philosophers on democracy, as the earlier Indian leaders did, his successful attempt in bringing a large mass of the people to the national movement was a great step towards democratising the political life of the country.

Direction Towards Freedom

The sense of direction of the national movement under Gandhi's leadership was also undoubtedly towards
strengthening the political forces which championed freedom - freedom of the individual and of the nation.

When restrictions were made by the Government on the freedom of speech, Gandhi wrote in *Young India*:

Swaraj, the Khilafat, the Punjab occupy a subordinate place to the issue sprung upon the country by the Government. We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make any further progress towards our goal. The Government would kill us if they could by a flank attack. To accept defeat in the matter of free speech and free association is to court disaster. If the Government is allowed to destroy non-violent activities in the country, however dangerous they may be to its existence, even the moderates' work must come to a standstill. In the general interest, therefore, we must defend these elementary rights with our lives. . . . The safest and the quickest way to defend these rights is to ignore the restriction. We must speak the truth under a shower of bullets. We must band together in the face of bayonets. No cost is too great for purchasing these fundamental rights. (42)

Gandhi's great contribution to the national movement was that by making such fervent appeals to the people, he could arouse great enthusiasm among them for the cause of freedom. He could also inspire them for making great sacrifices in furtherance of that cause. He himself led the way. When he was prosecuted by the Government, instead of trying to defend himself, he said:

Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for Non-cooperation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon

me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. (43)

This statement reflected a departure from the attitude of the political leaders who preceded Gandhi. With this open defiance of authority entered a new spirit in the Indian national movement and politics. No more was it easy to curb the desires of the people for freedom.

Even Gandhi's liking for law and order and his loyalty to non-violence were qualified by his desire to fight for freedom. On one occasion he said: "... anarchy under Home Rule was better than orderly foreign rule." (44) He also said that he "would have India to become free even by violence rather than that she should remain in bondage. In slavery she is a helpless partner in the violence of the slave holder." (45)

As this statement makes it clear the dominant objective of Gandhi's political activities was the achievement of the freedom of the country and it was this objective which was the reason for the favourable response of a large section of the people to his appeals to them to participate in the political struggle. The political campaigns led by Gandhi opened a new chapter in the history of the national movement by making a spirit of resistance to authority an important

(43) Ibid., 1054.
(45) Gandhi, n. 5, 290.
factor in the public life. As the official historian of the Congress notes:

Fear had been cast off by the people. A sense of self-respect developed in the Nation. Congressmen realized that service and self-sacrifice were the only means of winning public confidence. The prestige too of Government was materially shaken, and people had received good lessons regarding the ideology of Swaraj. (46)

It seemed that by the inauguration of the non-cooperation movement of 1919-1921 the Indian National Congress reached the point of no return as far as its march towards its ultimate objective of the freedom of the country was concerned.

The Total Impact of Gandhi's Ideology and Programme

It is difficult to assess the impact of Gandhi's ideology and programme on the Indian national movement during 1919-1921 without taking into consideration how he influenced it later. It can safely be asserted that he was the dominant figure in Indian political field from 1919 upto his death in 1948. During this period Gandhi shifted his emphasis from one point of view to another as occasion demanded and the response of the politically conscious people of India to Gandhi's ideology and programme also varied from one period to another. But the non-cooperation movement of 1919-1921 and Gandhi's utterances of this period are significant, because both had a determining influence on the character of the Indian national movement and its political philosophy.

It will be wrong to assume that just because a large number of people accepted Gandhi’s political leadership, they accepted all his views. We noted above some divergence in the thinking of Gandhi and some of his followers on such fundamental questions as non-violence, spiritual basis of political action, modern civilization and the role of cottage industries in the economic development of the country. But there was a wide area of agreement between Gandhi and his followers on the political objectives of the national movement and the programme of action for realizing them.

According to Gandhi and his followers the ultimate objective of the national movement was the freedom of the country and the immediate objectives of such political programme as the non-cooperation movement was to redress the specific grievances connected with the Rowlatt Act, Jallianwala Bagh firings and the Khilafat.

A militant struggle - though non-violent in form - was the nature of the political agitation he led. Here, again, he got the unqualified allegiance of his followers who displayed great courage and willingness to make great sacrifices for the country.

But the minds of some of them rebelled against Gandhi’s decision to suspend the non-cooperation movement on the ground that some people became violent and killed some policemen. They had no faith in the inherent virtue of non-violent methods. But as tactical withdrawals and a display of restraint in the
struggle against a mighty empire by an unarmed people were not unwise steps, this action of Gandhi did not lead to the rejection of Gandhi's leadership by his followers. In other words while Gandhi adhered to non-violence as a principle many of his followers accepted it as a tactics.

Gandhi's opposition to modern civilization, sometimes referred to as Western civilization, was not supported by some of his followers because they wanted to reconstruct Indian state, economy and society on modern lines. But it appealed to a large section of the people of India, because by glorifying the ancient Indian civilization and holding it as superior to the modern western civilization, such an attitude of opposition to the civilization of the alien rulers gave great self-confidence and sense of pride to them. Even those who differed from Gandhi on this issue realized the immense mass appeal of the slogans based on such an attitude. The realization of this fact by them and Gandhi's tolerance of those, who differed from him so long as they accepted his leadership in the political sphere, facilitated his emergence as the supreme national leader during 1919-1921, because unlike the "Moderates" and the "Extremists", his appeal was not confined either to those who looked to the West for inspiration or to the earlier periods of Indian history for the same purpose.

Gandhi's use of symbols like "Ramrajya" and his emphasis on prayer and fasting made an appeal primarily to
the Hindu masses. But before 1921 it did not antagonize many educated Hindus, who have no use for them because they were impressed by the fact that they gave discipline and spiritual stamina to many of those who participated in the political struggle.

Some of Gandhi's writings and speeches on these matters had no appeal to the Muslims. But a vast number of them accepted Gandhi's lead because he gave unqualified support to them on such issues as the Khilafat with which they were concerned. As we noted in the earlier chapter Gandhi's ideas and programme did promote Hindu-Muslim unity during 1918-1921; however, that unity was not based on the concept that Hindus and Muslims should lose their separate identities and merge into one political stream, but on the view that Hindus and Muslims, though separate entities, could join in an alliance for some joint political action.

Some political workers and leaders, who were very active before 1918, could not associate themselves with the national movement under Gandhi's leadership, because they could not accept his ideas or the wisdom of the political campaigns he launched. Some of the most prominent among them were Surendranath Banerjea, Bipin Chandra Pal, C. Y. Chintamony and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Rabindra Nath Tagore, an eminent poet, who once associated himself with the political movements of Bengal, was another critic of Gandhi. Their criticisms were mostly concerned with the intolerance set in
motion by Gandhi's militant campaigns, the anarchist ideas of Gandhi, the chauvinist elements in Gandhi's opposition to modern Western civilization and the unscientific nature of his views regarding the large-scale application of modern industrial methods in the economic field.

Although the critics of Gandhi were well-known people, who possessed tremendous intellectual power, Gandhi could easily carry the masses with him because he became a symbol of the aspirations of the people for freedom and a rallying point for people of different social background and cultural levels. Gandhi's views on social and economic questions and the philosophical basis of his political actions might have had many drawbacks; but, during 1918-1921, all of them fitted in with his essential scheme of drawing all the political currents, which preceded him, into the one stream of the national movement and leading it in the form of a militant, though non-violent, struggle against the alien Government.

Gandhi was primarily a man of action and not a philosopher or political theorist. The legacy of his political actions in the ideological field had both positive and negative sides. More than any other leader Gandhi strengthened the cause of freedom of the individual and the country by fighting for it and he promoted the democratic spirit by reducing the gulf between the leader and the followers by many items of his political programme. But some of his ideas were also conducive to the strengthening of obscurantism and some degree of revivalism in the country,
They went against the spirit of scientific enquiry and the ideas of the Ages of Enlightenment and Reason. Many of those who accepted Gandhi's leadership in the political sphere were not committed to Gandhi's total philosophy. So it cannot be said that the non-cooperation movement of 1919-1921 had also as that made by the same impact as some of the negative sides of Gandhism had. So the non-cooperation movement of 1919-21 did not have the full impact of all aspects of Gandhism.