CHAPTER - III
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GANDHIAN THOUGHT AND THE ROLE OF RAJAJI

As the Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchengode is successfully contributing in translating to implement Gandhian thought into action, it is more appropriate to know Gandhian thought and his Sarvodaya Philosophy. This in a way will enable the reader to understand how Rajaji and his Ashram at Tiruchengode is akin to the Gandhian thought and his Philosophy.

SARVODAYA PERSPECTIVE

The philosophy of Sarvodaya makes the attempt of reorienting human mind of reconstructing human society. Sarvodaya means welfare and prosperity of all. All must progress together without collision of interest. Prosperity is not attained in vacuum. It needs money after all but what type of money? Money earned without moral and spiritual considerations leads to animality. When man becomes possession-oriented he does not care for anything good or bad. This leads to social imbalance. Sarvodaya is a philosophy, which provides check against these imperfections of human mind and soul. It endeavours to put man on the tract, which may lead him to real social happiness.1

Gandhi’s Conception of Sarvodaya becomes significant against the background of the spiritual philosophy of India. In the words of Gandhi, “I do not believe that spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields”.  

The greatest truth – ‘Satya’ being the unity of all life, self-expression consists in striving after “the welfare of all” which is the essence of Sarvodaya ideology. This was his life mission. The application of moral truths to the facts of social life is the essence of Gandhian way of life. 

Sarvodaya is indeed an attempt to develop Gandhian ideas regarding decentralization and villagism. He was convinced that mere institutional structures will not suffice for the concrete realization of rights and hence he postulated the ideal of “Ramarajya”, which means the kingdoms of love, justice and righteousness. Gandhi’s message to the followers of Sarvodaya ideal is, “Let those who believe in non violence as the method of real freedom keep the lamp of non-violence burning bright in the midst of present impenetrable gloom.

2 -M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 3.2.1925, p.304.
3 -T.S Devadoss, Sarvodaya and the Problems of Political Sovereignty, University of Madras, 1974, p.63
4 -Ibid., p.63
The truth of a few will count; the untruth of millions will vanish even like chaff before a whiff of wind".\(^5\)

To understand correctly how Gandhi’s life was moulded, one has to go back to his childhood and see what ideas and impressions influenced him most. The influences of childhood generally make a deeper impression and are more permanent.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on the 2\(^{nd}\) October 1869 at Porbandar in a coastal city, northwest of Bombay, in a family belonging to the Bania division of the third ranking vaisyas. His home life was cultured and the family, by Indian standards, was well to do. As a boy he admired the, "practicality of his father’s but he loved his mother Putli Bai and was greatly influenced by her, “saintliness” and her “deeply religious” nature which later helped him to possess an unquenchable faith in God and made his life a lesson for all ages to come.\(^6\)

It was after his maiden visit to South Africa that Gandhi became conscious of a life mission and throughout his life there after he made it his sole concern to be devoted to that mission which was to champion the cause of the victimized and the oppressed as against insolence and might of those who

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5- M.K.Gandhi, Harijan, May12, 1946. 
6- T.S. Devodoss, Sarvodaya and the problems of political sovereignty, University of Madras, p.66.
enslaved and oppressed them. His non-violence struggle against social discrimination strengthened the basic philosophy of life.

Gandhi’s personality was highly influenced by Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau. In their schemes of personal purification Gandhiji and Tolstoy have great resemblance. Gandhi came to know Tolstoy through “The kingdom of God is with in you”. Tolstoy’s simplicity of life and purity of purpose influenced Gandhi very much. Tolstoy accepted love for the law of life. The principle of non-violence is based on love for the entire mankind. Both Tolstoy and Gandhi adopted the instrument of love to solve all problems in their lives.

It was Tolstoy who impressed upon Gandhi’s mind the importance of Bread Labour. For Tolstoy, the man who abstains from manual labour is a thief of the society. Gandhi acknowledged his debt to Tolstoy. He says, “The law, that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy’s writing, On Bread labour, only those men deserve to eat bread who actually till the ground, spin cloth and produce things”. According to Gandhi since every

8 - Ibid.
9- Ibid.
man has an obligation to society and to one self, bread labour becomes an imperative duty, which must be performed by each and every man.  

However Gandhi is far more practical than Tolstoy. The moral content of Gandhi's doctrine of ahimsa is of higher significance than that of Tolstoy's. This is to the fact that Gandhi was greatly influenced by the Gita ideal of niskamakarma, i.e. action without attachment. 

Another western philosopher with whom Gandhi felt spiritual brotherhood was the American Pacifist Thoreau. Man, according to Thoreau was a social being that is generally disposed to Co-operation with fellow beings for social good. He visualized a society in which government will disappear. "That government is best which governs least". 

Like Thoreau, Gandhi also held that the democracy could be realized only in a stateless society. Such a society can be organized on the basis of Truth and Non-violence. The ideal society is characterized by a respect for individual liberty and free growth and a simultaneous respect for the needs, efficiency,

10 - Ibid.
solidarity, natural growth and perfection of the corporate being, the society or nation. Thus Gandhi heard an echo of his own thought in Thoreau.

Finally Ruskin influenced Gandhi. In one of the chapters of Gandhi’s autobiography, “The Magic spell of a book” he describes the effects of Ruskin’s “Unto This Last”, which means uplift of the last He translated it later into Gujarati calling it Sarvodaya. He read this book in 1904. His friend Polak had given him a copy of this book to read when he was travelling from Johannesburg to Durban. Before Gandhi got off the train he was determined to put Ruskin’s ideals in to practice.

Gandhi believed like Ruskin that what is good for all must also be good for each and every individual. Gandhi’s modification of the concept from “Welfare of Last” – antyodaya, to “Welfare of all “ - Sarvodaya is profoundly significant. It has been pointed out by Sarvodaya thinkers that the service of the neediest should not be at the cost of humanity.

According to Gandhi, the teachings of Unto The Last are”,

1) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

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13 - B.K.Ahuwalia and shashi Ahluwalia, Rajaji and Gandhi, Allora Publications, New Delhi, p.32.
2) That lawyer's work has the same value as the barbers in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work,

3) That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. ¹⁴

Gandhi immediately decided to buy a farm where a community life could be lived. Thus was founded the Phoenix Settlement, on a hundred acres of land some fourteen miles from Durban in the year 1904. Thus the revolutionary idea of Sarvodaya was born anew on that memorable day. Indian Opinion was published from the Phoenix settlement and its every inmate was also a typesetter. It was the life of a Community trying to serve the Indian community in South Africa and living a life of poverty and hard labour. ¹⁵

Added to these, Gandhian thought owes much to the scriptures of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism. While Gandhi was in England and in South Africa, he made acquaintance with the world religions. They strengthened in him the consciousness of the spiritual aspect of the well

¹⁴–Ibid., p. solidarity, natural growth and 33.
being of man. He read works on “Buddhism” and studied the “Gita” which he regarded as the “spiritual reference book”.  

Gandhi imbibed the moral teachings of prophets of Asia, Viz, Rama, Buddha, Mahavira, Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, Confucius, Nanak, Vivekananda and other prophets, and was content not merely with an inward realization of the moral precepts but wanted to make them dynamic. The revival of the ancient teachings by Gandhi and incorporating them in his philosophy of Sarvodaya is perhaps his greatest contribution to world thought. 

The entire life of Gandhi was an experiment with truth, and the experiment ultimately proved the victory of truth over untruth, of love over hatred and violence. Anyone who had closely followed the career of Gandhi from the time of his espousing the cause of the Indians in South Africa till the day of his tragic assassination at the hands of his own Country men and of his own faith will be struck by certain qualities whose combination went to make his tower like Mount Everest above his greatest contemporaries in India and abroad. If there was in him a great deal of the saint, there were also in him many of the simple traits of the peasant and the common man.  

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16- T.S. Devadoss, op cit. p.79.
17- Ibid., p.90.
18- Ibid., p.91.
Trusteeship is the elimination of class struggle of hatred and bias and is the restoration of love and mutuality in Gandhiji’s Code. Gandhiji’s economic thought is interwoven with ethics of the highest order. Gandhiji was of the opinion that Sarvodaya can be attained only when selfless individuals have fallen in line to reform and reconstruct society that does not take its weapon of steel rather takes into kindliest consideration the need of others prior to his own. For this Gandhiji prescribed certain views for those individuals who would bear the yoke with him. For building a Sarvodaya Society in India, Gandhiji gave 18-fold programme. They are as follows:

1. Communal Unity
2. Removal of Untouchability
3. Prohibition
4. Khadi
5. Other rural industries
6. Village sanitation
7. Nai Talim
8. Adult Education
9. Uplift of Women
10. Education in health and hygiene
11. Provincial Language

12. National Language

13. Economic equality

14. Uplift of Kisans

15. Uplift of Labour

16. Nursing the Lepers

17. Uplift of Adivasis

18. Students.

The Constructive programme of Gandhiji has been developing since 1921 and for 8 years from 1922 to 29, he remained away from the scene of active politics. During this period he devoted to the organization and implementation of constructive work. He believed that the acceptance and completion of the constructive programme would lead to the achievement of Purna Swaraj or complete Independence. It was designed to build up the Nation from the very bottom upward. 20

Evolution of Satyagraha Ashram:

As seen earlier it was in 1904 that Gandhiji started the “Phoenix Settlement” near Durban in Natal after the Zulu rebellion was crushed.

Later in 1911 the Tolstoy Farm was founded near Johannesburg in Transvaal, with 1000 acres of land attached to it. 21

The Tolstoy Farm was meant for the families of satyagrahis who were arrested during the Civil Resistance Movement. It had almost all the essential features and was the true mother of the Satyagraha Ashram started in 1915. In both the Phoenix settlement and in the Tolstoy Farm the inmates set an example by doing the meanest of jobs. 22

When Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1915, he wanted to find a home of his own for his fairly numerous families, i.e., the Satyagrahis from Tolstoy Farm and Phoenix Settlement. Most of them had been sent first to Santiniketan, in Bengal of Rabindranath Tagore’s. 23

Mahatma wanted to find a home eventually in the neighbourhood of Ahmedabad, the textile-manufacturing town that was the capital of his native Gujarat province. The society of the Friends of India supplied the money necessary for the purchase of the land and the building of the huts. Gandhi hoped that the rich merchants of Ahmedabad, his fellow Gujarathi, would provide the funds to continue the work. 24

22- B.K. Ahluwalia & Shasi Ahluwalia, Rajaji and Gandhi, op.cit, p. 33.
23- Vincent Sheean, Mahatama Gandhi A Great Life in Brief, Publications Division, Delhi, 1968, p. 79.
24- Ibid., p.79.
The Sathyagraha Ashram as it was called, but came to be known before long, from the place where it was built, as Sabarmathi was founded on May 25, 1915. Sabarmathi was near enough to Ahmedabad to bear a close relation to it, far enough away to be independent of it in daily life. “As Ahmedabad was an ancient Centre of handloom weaving, it was likely to be the most favourable field for the revival of the cottage industry of hand spinning. There was also hope that, the city being the capital of Gujarat, monetary help from its wealthy citizens would be more available here than elsewhere”.  

Gandhi and his friends first wanted to decide about the name of the Ashram. His friends suggested many names like “Tapovan” - abode of austerities, “Sevashram” - Abode of service etc. But according to Gandhi, “Our creed was devotion to truth, and our business was the search for and insistence on truth. I wanted to acquaint India with the method I had tried in South Africa and I desired to test in India the extent to which its application might be possible. So my companions and I selected the name sathyagraha Ashram as conveying both our goal and our method of service”.

26-Ibid., p.298.
In the original Ashram there were about twenty-five men and women. Among them thirteen persons were Tamilians. Five Tamil youngsters had accompanied Gandhi from South Africa. All members in the Ashram vowed to Chastity, Poverty and a Life of service, all committed to every form of communal work including that usually performed by untouchables.

There were no servants in Gandhi’s Ashram. All were equal and all shared the same work for the same pay although some were better at something than at others. Just as Satyagraha was Gandhiji’s greatest contribution and epochal invention in the field of social methodology, so were his Ashrams the finest community institutions for launching them in the Indian world.

At crucial moments Gandhiji had contemplated sacrificing all the settlers in the Sathyagraha movement. The salt march of 80 inmates from the Sathyagraha Ashram, known as the Dandhi March, has become an epic legend like the great legend of the Mahabharatha. The Ashrams were the strongholds and fortresses of resistance in all Gandhiji’s campaign of Civil Resistance.

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27-Ibid., p.298
28. Vincent Sheean, Mahatma Gandhi, A Great Life in Brief, op.cit. p.81
29. N.N.Malkani, Ramblings and Reminiscenses of Gandhiji, op.cit. p.150
All the activities in the Ashram were symbols and sign posts for new movements and campaigns. The admission of an outcaste in 1915, within a few months after establishing the Ashram led to the campaign for abolition of untouchability and the founding of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The small dairy and tannery in the Ashram led to the campaign for cow-protection and the founding of the All India Goseva Sangh. The Sacrificial spinning of inmates led to the revival of hand spinning and the founding of the All-India Spinners’ and All India village Industries Associations. The little school and Gandhiji’s experiment as a teacher led to the educational theory of Basic education and the founding of the All-India Talimi Sangh. All his Nationwide movement proceeded from the Ashram.  

Gandhiji’s Ashrams were centres for the service of India and through them of the World, by founding almost a new social order known as the Sarvodaya Samaj. Indian History will remember Gandhiji as the author of its political Independence with his matchless weapon of Satyagraha.

30. Ibid., p.159.
The Statue of Rajaji in the Ashram.
RAJAJI AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GANDHIAN IDEAS

Chakaravarthi Rajagopalachari popularly known as “Rajaji” or “C.R”, an ardent patriot and one of India’s eminent statesman the first and the only Indian Governor-General of Independent India was a pioneering social reformer, an able administrator and a profound scholar. He was so close to Gandhi in his way of life and his spiritual faith that he was widely regarded as the Tamil Gandhi. They worked together for the national cause, which was dear to both.  

Rajaji and Gandhi were not born great. They were born in middle class families and were not in any way outstanding in their studies. But they trained themselves to face all risks cheerfully and undergo sufferings gracefully. Their lives were unique examples of unity of thought, word and action. They did not lay down one policy for the leaders and another for the masses. They practiced what they preached. That was one of the secrets of their success.

Both Rajaji and Gandhi had identified themselves with the masses. They lived like them and for them. It was this self-imposed poverty which enabled them to the people, who learnt from them self-reliance and self-respect.

32 - Ibid.
Early Life of Rajaji:

Rajaji was born on December 10, 1878 in a small village called Thorapally in the erstwhile Salem District of Tamilnadu to Nallan Chakaravarthy Iyenger and Singaramma as their third son. He was nine years younger to Gandhi. He completed his early education in Hosur and Central College, Bangalore. After obtaining his law degree from Madras Law College he joined Salem Bar in 1900. He soon carved out niche for himself with his formidable logic and analytical ability He went as a representative from South to Calcutta Congress Convention in 1906. He also participated in Surat congress convention in 1907. He met poet Subramanya Bharathi at Pondicherry in 1910. He was elected as the chairman of Salem Municipal Council from 1917 and continued in the post till 1919. It was during these early experiences he zealously furthered his ideals of Harijan upliftment and prohibition from 1919 to 1972, the year in which he became immortal. Rajaji was a great leader who worked untiringly for the welfare of Indian country men especially for the development of the rural Community. In achieving this end he completely followed the Gandhian way of Satyagraha and Non-Violence through carrying forward his Constructive Programme into a reality.

34 - Ibid.
35 - Ibid.
Rajaji’s life is connected with various places from Thorapally to Thiruchengode, Salem, Vedaranyam, Madras and Delhi. But Thiruchengode has a great impact and lasting impression. Though the other places have lasting and fond memories, Thiruchengode exists as a living monument and is very closely connected with freedom movement. It is a centre for active Gandhian Philosophy and social-economic development following the footsteps of Gandhiji. Rajaji, after having closely followed him in all his activities, continued political activities with socio-economic development. Thiruchengode Gandhi Ashram became the nerve centre for Gandhiji’s aims & objectivities in implementing the Constructive Programme of Khadi, Prohibition and Eradication of Untouchability.\(^{36}\)

**Impact of Gandhiji**

"My conscience keeper" that is how Gandhi described Rajaji. Gandhi and Rajaji met for the first time in 1919 when Gandhi was in Madras at the invitation of Mr. Kasturi Ranga Iyenger, the editor of Hindu. The man behind the invitation was Rajaji. But this Gandhiji came to know only very late, that too through his secretary Mahadev Desai.\(^{37}\) At their very first meeting Rajaji came closer to Gandhi.

\(^{36}\) - [www.Gandhi ashram.org](http://www.Gandhi ashram.org)

The meeting of these two great men proved good to decide the future of India. Rajaji made it a mission of his life to spread the message of Gandhi whom he called his Master. Rajaji followed the Gandhian way of life in thought, word and action, yet he differed from his master in the realm of politics. But their differences only deepened their mutual love and regard for each other. Rajaji’s frank and sincere criticism was appreciated by the Master. Gandhi once said, “Rajaji sees atleast six months ahead of me”.  

“The impact of Mahatma Gandhi”, writes K.T.Narasimhachar “on Rajaji in his middle age had made him a devoted lieutenant of Gandhiji and a doughty fighter for India’s freedom. Most of the other distinguished men who had responded to the call of the country admired the ideals of Gandhiji but could not adopt them in their actual life. But there was one man who was converted by the Consummate philosophy of life and action so consistently preached and practiced by the Father of the Nation and made it part of his own, there was one man who trod the Gandhian path of truth and non-violence whether he was in jail for the cause of the country’s emancipation or occupying Viceroy’s House; there was one man who made it the mission of his life, even as his Master had done, to impress on his people the urgent need for following dharma with faith

38 – Ibid., p.2.
in God, there was one man like Hanuman to Mahatma Gandhi that was Rajaji”. 39

Rajaji had met Gandhi in 1919 but he had been getting news about him from the newspapers since 1906. 40 To quote his biographer Rajamohan Gandhi, “From 1906 onwards newspapers had published items about a Gujarati barrister called M.K. Gandhi who was battling in South Africa for the rights of Indians”. The activity of Gandhi impressed Rajaji. 41

Rajaji had so much regard for Gandhi that he told his ten-year-old daughter not to use “avan” While speaking of Gandhi. “Avan” in Tamil is “he” without respect. “Why not?” asked papa “Is he a Brahmin?” C.R. Replied “but he and his wife are like Rama and Sita” All these show the regard Rajaji had towards Gandhi even before his personal contact with him i.e. from the year 1919. 42

**Involvement in the Freedom Movement**

The Ashram remained as a meeting place for the members of the Indian National Congress from the day of its inception to discuss various issues. 1920

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was the year of the emergence of Gandhi on the Indian political scene and his quick rise to a position of pre-eminence as a national leader. GopalaKrishnaGokhale was Gandhi's mentor and it was Gokhale who felt that time had come for Gandhi to return to India and to take part in Indian politics. He arrived in India early in 1915 and was warmly received by Gokhale. Gandhi decided to settle down in Gujarat and practice as a Barrister. But Gokhale and others felt he should settle down in Bombay, which at that time was the focal point for Indian Nationalism. Though Gandhi agreed to consider the proposal of Gokhale, he was keen on establishing an Ashram and to study and work more for the betterment of the villages.

Within few months Gokhale had passed away and the grief was in-consolable to Gandhi. During the following years Gandhi involved himself successfully in the Champaran episode in Bihar state and settling the dispute between the workers and the owners of the Textile Mill in Ahmedabad. Gandhi attended for the first time, the All India Congress session held at Calcutta in 1917.

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45 – Ibid.
He came close with the important national leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru and his young Barrister son Jawaharlal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and others.  

When the First World War came to a close in 1918, there were great expectations in the air. The Montague Chelmsford reforms offered little by way of effective transfer of power to the elected legislature. Then the Rowlatt Bill was passed which restricted the rights of the citizens to meet and express their views. Gandhi gave a clarion-call for opposing the legislation. Gandhi put forth his proposal for total non-cooperation with the Government by

(a) Government Servants renouncing their jobs
(b) Lawyers boycotting the courts
(c) Teachers and students leaving Government run Educational Institutions and
(d) Business firms refusing to carry out Government contracts.

August 6, 1918 was chosen to observe a nationwide hartal in opposition to the Rowlatt Act. On August first, Lokamanya Tilak breathed his last.

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47 – Ibid., p. 81.
48 – Ibid.
It was indeed a great blow to the Indian National Congress. The mantle of leadership automatically fell on Gandhi. The Hartal was a total success. 49

Gandhi brought reforms in the functioning of the Indian National congress. He established All India Congress Committee representations of all provinces and created constitutional provincial units on a linguistic basis and entrusted with the authority of decision-making. He travelled widely and spoke of Khadi and of the need to rid Hindu society of the cancer of untouchability. 50

The Khilafat movement, which took place after the First World War, was another development. Gandhi offered full support to the Muslims in their Khilafat agitation and got the Indian National Congress to support the Muslim cause. The Rowlatt Agitation and Khilafat movement merged into single battle with the Imperial Government. 51

The year 1919 proved to be a turning point not only in the country’s history but also in the lines of the great freedom fighters including Rajagopalachari. On February 24, 1919 Gandhi called for a pledge by the people to resist the oppressive legislative measure. A Satyagraha Sabha was also

49 – Ibid.
50 - Ibid.
51 - Ibid., p.82
started in Bombay. Gandhiji on an invitation from Kasturiranga Iyengar, editor and owner of “The Hindu”, Madras, arrived in Madras on March 18, 1919 and stayed with Rajaji, initially not knowing who was his host.  

Gandhi was put up at a house on Cathedral Road, which Gandhi thought was the residence of Kasturiranga Iyengar. Actually it was the residence of Rajagopalachari who had only recently shifted to Madras from Salem and had begun practicing at the Madras Bar. It did not take much time for Gandhi and Rajaji to develop an intimate relationship since Gandhi found in Rajaji, a person who could analyse issues objectively and speak out his mind without worrying whether the criticism was welcome, Gandhi, in fact needed such a person on his side. On the fifth day of Gandhi’s stay in Rajaji’s house Gandhi got the idea of a countrywide Hartal, “While he was still in the twilight condition of sleep and consciousness.” He told Rajaji, “We should call upon the country to observe a general “Hartal”. Satyagraha………. is a sacred fight… let all the people of India therefore, suspend their business on that day as one of fasting and prayer…. It is very difficult to say whether all the provinces would respond to

53 - Hartal - a Hindi word, which means to renounce all activities on the day.
the appeal of ours or not but I feel fairly sure of Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sind”.  

April 6, 1919 was the day fixed for the Hartal. Owing to lack of communication Delhi observed it even on March 30 and it turned out to be an “Unprecedented success”. April 6, found the country totally paralyzed. Every town and village in the country responded to Gandhiji’s call. Peaceful demonstrations, processions and meetings were held everywhere.  

Thus April 6, 1919 was the day on which India opened non-violent war against British imperialism. Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy, “the satyagraha campaign constitutes an attempt to revolutionise politics and restore moral force to its original position.” The response to the call was amazing. Towns and Villages in every part of the country vied with one another to make the Hartal a success, to demonstrate that a common feeling stirred the hearts of all Indians. A new confidence was born, and it was the beginning of a new era.  

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The Campaign for non-co-operation had two kinds of objects: constructive and destructive. In the pursuance of the former, it was decided to raise a fund of one crore of rupees in the name of Tilak to finance the non-co-operation activities; to enroll a volunteer corps of one crore members to help in the promotion of the various boycotts-social, educational, legal and economic and to distribute twenty lakh spinning wheels to provide work for the unemployed or underemployed and to replace foreign cloth by hand-made Indian cloth. 57

In regard to the latter, the important items were:

1. The boycott of the law courts by the lawyers who would set up popular tribunals for administering justice.

2. The Boycott of schools and colleges owned or aided or recognized by Government and the establishment of national educational institutions.

3. The Boycott of elections to the assembly and the provincial councils.

4. The Surrender of honours, titles, etc., and the Boycott of official functions.

5. The Boycott of British goods and the encouragement of Swadeshi, especially Khaddar or home spun, home-oven cloth and

6. The prohibition of drinking liquor. 58

57 – Ibid., p.493.
58 – Ibid., p.493
The country was profoundly stirred and an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm ran through India’s teeming millions. Unparalleled scenes of fervour, devotion and sacrifice were witnessed everywhere. Lawyers of the distinction such as Motilal Nehru, C.R.Das, Rajendra prasad and Rajagopalachari surrendered their highly profitable profession; thousands of students came out of colleges and schools and many National Institutions were founded where Teachers worked on a pittance. 59

August 1920 was a turning point in the lives of few personalities who had played an important role in the non-co-operation movement. 60 Gandhi had come to Madras accompanied by Ali Brothers to recruit volunteers for the non-co-operation movement against the Rowlatt Act and the Khilafat injustice. On August 12, 1920 he addressed a mammoth public meeting on the Marina. 61 At the meeting it was announced that on the next evening there would be a meeting at Gokhale Hall on the Broadway. The meeting was intended primarily for intellectuals. K. Santhanam, S. Ramanathan, N.S. Varadachari and K. Rajagopalan - all of them classmates attended the meeting. 62 Gandhi’s speech and the call given by him to join the non-co-operation movement

59- Ibid.
61- Ibid.
62 – Ibid.
attracted these youngsters to join in the same. Gandhi accepted K. Santhanam and others and asked them to report to Rajagopalachari for instructions.

Simultaneously he asked them to take the Charkha - spinning Wheel. One of the four men had asked Gandhi what the spinning wheel had to do with a struggle for political self-rule. He told them, “I am not sure whether you have ever seen a spinning wheel. I suggest that each one of you procure a wheel and some cotton and learn to spin yarn. After you have mastered spinning, if you still have any reservation as to its utility in the freedom struggle, I shall gladly exempt you from the necessity of spinning”. In due course the four young men realised how difficult it was to spin yarn on the wheel, how very poor women in Salem and Coimbatore Districts eked out an earning of less than half a rupee by spinning and how Khadar did really signify identification with the powers of the poor in the Country, a condition precedent to any worthwhile political activity designed to achieve freedom. Thus Santhanam and others joined the non-co-operation movement. Santhanam became a close friend of Rajaji and was the manager of the Gandhi Ashram from the year 1926 to 1930 and by that time he had become an expert in khadi activities.

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63 - Ibid., p.85.
64 - Ibid.
The Thirty Fifth annual Congress meeting was held in the year 1920 at Nagpur in Madhya pradesh which was a significant one in the history of the freedom movement in Tamilnadu as the session was presided over by an elderly political leader of Tamilnadu namely Salem C. Vijayaragavachariar.  

It was only in this annual meeting the non-co-operation movement was accepted as the main objective of achieving the freedom from the British. Thus the Gandhian Era also started only from this period onwards. The Tamilnadu Congress Committee was also established only after the Nagpur session Rajaji was elected as the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress only in the Nagpur session and only this raised the status of Rajaji as a National leader.  

There was a special session of the Congress at Allahabad to take a final decision on the inauguration of a Satyagraha campaign in the year 1921. At the session it was decided that Gandhi and Vallabhai Patel would organize the non-co-operation campaign in Bardoli district of Gujarat and tax payments would be refused. In the rest of the country orders prohibiting public meetings

would be defied. On fourteenth December 1921 Rajaji defied the ban on public meetings by addressing five thousand strong gathering in Vellore and he was promptly arrested and sentenced to three months simple imprisonment.

The non-co-operation movement under Gandhiji's lead spread among the masses. It stimulated numerous sections of the people to ventilate their grievances publicly and launch collective action for their removal.

The movement launched by Gandhiji had two aspects-positive and negative or constructive and destructive. The constructive programme included the promotion of Swadeshi, removal of untouchability among the Hindus, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition of the use of alcoholic drinks collection of a crore of rupees for the memorial of Tilak and the introduction of Charkhas in various homes.

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69- Raja Gopala Chari, Jail Diary, Bharathiya Vidhya Bhavan Bombay, 1922.
The destructive side is usually referred to as the triple boycott i.e. boycott of legislative courts and educational Institutions.\textsuperscript{72} Gandhiji during the course of his extensive tour of the country emphasized the constructive side more than the destructive side.

The Chauri Chaura incident, which took place in the year 1922, was a great tragedy and Gandhiji called this incident as the crime of Chauri Chaura.\textsuperscript{73} At his instance the Congress working Committee passed resolutions on Twelth February 1922 indefinitely surpassing all forms of civil disobedience and advising people to concentrate on the constructive programme.\textsuperscript{74} Soon after this Gandhiji was arrested and sentenced to six years imprisonment. Most non-co-operators were dismayed by Gandhi's abrupt suspension of the Satyagraha movement on the basis of a single instance of violence. Congressmen who had earlier wanted entry into Legislatures now raised their banner of revolt by forming a Swaraj party. In 1923 there was a battle between the "No changers" led by Rajaji, Rajendraprasad and others on the one side and the Swarajists led by

\textsuperscript{72– Ibid., p.156.} \textsuperscript{73– Ibid., p.162.} \textsuperscript{74– Ibid., p.162}
Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and others on the other side. At the Gaya session of the Congress, the “No changers” won, but it was a partial victory since the Congress was split into two parties.

When Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was released from prison, he felt distressed over the Congress split. At his suggestion a special session of the Congress was held at New Delhi in September 1923, when it was decided that:

a) The Swarajists would contest the Central Assembly and Provincial Council Elections and at the same time support the constructive programme to be undertaken by the No-changers and

b) The No-changers would engage themselves in constructive work as propounded by Gandhi and would not in any manner criticize or come in the way of Swarajist’s council entry programme. Thus the Congress unity was restored.

76 - Ibid., p.88
77 - Ibid.
78 - Ibid.
In pursuance of this decision C. Rajagopalachari and others of his thinking decided to organize a programme of constructive work, which would include promotion of Khadi production and sale, removal of untouchability, propaganda against use of foreign cloth and against drinking of liquor. At Salem during all this period of Non-Co-Operation movement there was picketing before toddy shops under the leadership of C. Rajagopalachari. 79 A Khadi Board was set up at Tirupur in Coimbatore District of Tamilnadu. E.V. Ramaswami Naicker became its chairman and K. Santhanam as the secretary. 80

Only in this background Rajaji had decided on the establishment of the Ashram on the lines of the one established at Sabarmathi by Gandhi. Thus the Gandhi Ashram came into existence on February 6, 1925. under the stewardship of Rajaji. 81

From the year 1925 to 1935 the Ashram remained as a nerve centre of various activities. Rajaji stayed there for the first ten years of its period and took personal care in its social and economic activities. Gandhiji visited the Ashram and stayed there for two nights within a month after the establishment of the

81- Ashram’s Report, Thiruchengode.
Ashram 82 Though the Ashram was situated in a remote place at Puduppalayam, a village located eleven kilometers away from Thiruchengode Taluk, and when there was no proper conveyance to reach the place in those days the visitors of the Ashram include various personalities of national and international importance. The visitor’s book of the Ashram is a treasure house to know the significance of the Ashram. 83

All through the years Gandhi Ashram at Thiruchengode kept the spirit of Non-Co-Operation alive. During this period the congress volunteers were arrested when they observed occasions like Gandhi cap day and Jawaharlal Nehru Day. 84

The epic march to Vedaranyam on 13th April 1930 under the command of Rajaji to defy the salt law and the British Government was planned and formulated only in the Gandhi Ashram. 85 This March was considered equal to that of the Dandi march of Mahatma Gandhi. Rajaji set about organizing the movement with his characteristic thoroughness. 86

82- Visitors Book of the Ashram, Thiruchengode  
83- Vide Appendix No. I for details.  
86 - Ibid.
Rajaji planned a march from Tiruchi to Vedaranyam, one of the well-known salt-manufacturing centres. He selected hundred volunteers after careful screening. The salt march started at mid-night of April 13, 1930 from the residence of Dr. T. S. S. Rajan at Tiruchi and wended its way to Vendaranyam by a 120-mile route. The march evoked great enthusiasm and response among the people all along the route, which included Srirangam, Kovilodu, Thirukattupalli, Thiruvaiyaru, Thangavur, Kumbakonam, Mannargudi and Thiruthuraipoondi.

As the Styagrahi’s marched on, it became evident that the entire cauvery basin bowed in respect to Rajaji. Some of them helped the Satayagrahis without bothering the orders of Mr. Thorne, the collector of Tanjore. The collector had issued a ban order on feeding of the Satyagrahis by the villages and town dwellers enroute. Rajaji spoke to the people on prohibition, Khadi, removal of social disabilities, the inequalities of foreign rule, the meaning and significance of the civil disobedience movement launched by Gandhiji and how people could support it. It was always an appeal to reason, not to emotion.

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88- Ibid.
89- Ibid.
90 - Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, Gandhi Ashram, Thiruchengode, 1986, p. IX.
The message of the Mahatma and the significance of the struggle were broadcast in different wavelengths to people of different levels with the result that Vedaranyam got linked up with Dandi. 91

The British Government found that these Satyagraha marches, particularly the Dandi march of Mahatma Gandhi and Vedaranyam march of Rajaji gathered great momentum is the course of their march. So the policy was changed. The marchers were arrested in the beginning itself and thus they sought to nip the movement in bud. 92

On seventh August 1933 Ashram’s founder Rajaji and sixteen other Satyagrahis including a Muslim, Harijan and two women walked from the Ashram premises at Puduppalayam to Thiruchengode, Eleven kilometer trek in pursuance of renewed civil disobedience Movement. 93 They gathered at the Forty Pillars Hall. Rajaji spoke advising boycott of foreign cloth. Then the party marched on foot along Thiruchengode principal streets, distributing handwritten leaflets and reached Taluk office compound. In front of the Taluk office Rajaji and other were arrested and sentenced six-month rigorous imprisonment. 94

91- Ibid.
92- Ibid., p.XXXII.
93- Ibid.
94- Ibid.
Rajaji was a person of strong conviction and strong beliefs who adhered to them. He accepted basically Mahatmaji’s approach to various problems. Rajaji’s faith in Mahatmaji was tremendous but he never allowed his mind to slip away. Whatever happened he came to his own conclusion. Therefore Rajaji, whether he sometimes disagreed or very often agreed with Gandhiji and Nehru, he brought an extraordinarily keen and analytical mind to bear on every question that came before them. Whether he agreed or disagreed, he would like every question to be discussed thoroughly. Nehru used to say that very few persons are there in India with whom he should like to discuss any intricate problem or issue, more than with Rajaji. He used to say that after a discussion with Rajaji whether he agreed with him or not, “it would do me good and probably I would agree with him”. That is the type of a keen mind, the mind of a person of the highest integrity and self-sacrifice. Rajaji is honoured for his spirit of individuality, service & sacrifice.

Gandhi had great regard for Rajaji’s opinion since they came from his beliefs. Gandhi wrote to Rajaji on July 16, 1925, “somehow or other I need your letter to feel that all is well with you... My innermost being wants your approbation of what I am doing and thinking I may not always succeed in getting it but it craves for your verdict”.  

95- B.K. Ahluwalia and Shashi Ahluwalia Rajaji and Gandhi – op.cit., p.4.
In the year 1938 Gandhi wrote in the Harijan as follows: “Let the reader share the secret with me that nobody among those who regard the congress acceptance of truth and non-violence as the rule of their lives and fights me as strenuously as C.Rajagopalachari does. But he has one essential virtue of a soldier. I became my own General of Satyagraha and my first recruit in 1906. When I announced my generalship in 1919 in India, Rajaji was among those who enlisted themselves at the very commencement. It was under his roof that the inspiration of the Hartal of 6th April came to me. From that day to this his loyalty to his General has been beyond reproach or compare......... I have boundless faith in his wisdom, his uprightness, and his unsurpassed ability as a parliamentarian among congressmen atleast. We have in our ranks no able fighter in satyagraha”.  

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