THE NATIONALIST UPSURGE (1919-25)

Representing 1919

It can be said in earnest that the year 1919 was a watershed in the annals of the freedom movement. For it saw the rise of Gandhi on the national scene and he was effectively carving out his philosophy of *Satyagraha*. Gandhi described it as follows:

“‘I have also called it love-force or soul force. This force is indestructible. He who uses it perfectly understands his position. It can also be called more popularly but less accurately, passive resistance. The force of arms is powerless when matched against the force of love and soul.’”¹

And Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1909 defined it as follows:

“It is essentially defensive in its nature and it fights with moral and spiritual weapons. A passive resister resists tyranny by undergoing suffering in his own person. He pits soul force against brute force; he puts the divine in man against the brute in man; he pits suffering against oppression, pits conscience against might; he pits faith against injustice; right against wrong.”²

Satyagraha was not only an appeal to the British constitution, it was also an appeal to the British conscience. In 1908 Gandhi defined it as ‘*self imposed suffering of an acute type*, intended to

---

prove justice of the cause, and thus bring conviction home to the minds of the Colonialists.³

As Gandhi himself admitted satyagraha was undertaken after the methods of petitioning etc, had been exhausted, and in order to draw public attention to a grievance that was keenly felt and resented by the (Indian) community. But it was not entirely uninfluenced by developments outside South Africa, notably those in Ireland, England and India. Gandhi was a keen observer of events and movements in foreign lands. He saw the struggle of the Indians in South Africa not as an isolated venture, but as a part of a wider, international movement.⁴ Gandhi was not interested in chauvinistic nationalism- he aspired to a universalism that soared above narrow political goals.⁵

The British Raj appointed in 1917 what is known as the Rowlatt Committee to “investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India” and “to advise as to the legislation, if any, necessary to enable Government to deal effectively with them.”⁶

⁴ Ibid., p. 138.
⁵ David Hardiman, *Gandhi in His Time and Ours*, Delhi, 2003, p. 16.
⁶ As early as 1916 the British officials were considering how to retain some of their war time powers when the war ended; and in 1917 a committee was appointed under a Scottish judge, S.A.T. Rowlatt to check the spurt of revolutionary activities if they were taking place and its report in July 1918 pointed Bengal, Punjab and Bombay as
Rowlatt Act deprived the suspected persons even from the ordinary rights and privileges of trial and defence provided under the law. It was a big disappointment and of scorn to the Indians as it discarded the fundamental principles of justice and violated the constitutional rights of the people at a time when there was no danger to the state.\textsuperscript{7} Saifuddin Kitchlew the famous Congress leader of Punjab while delivering a speech at Jalandhar on 1 April 1919 had described the Rowlatt Bill as a ‘Kaala Naag’ (black cobra) and it aims to destroy and ruin our coming generations. He asked people to obey the words of Mahatma Gandhi and make an all round hartal on 6 April as the people of Amritsar had done on 30 March 1919.\textsuperscript{8}

By appointing the Rowlatt Committee, the government wanted to assume necessary powers to combat during the post war period a resurgence of revolutionary activity which it anticipated.

While Gandhi and others were busy contributing to the government’s war efforts in different ways and hoping of “a new order of things” without trouble and disorder, the people were trying

\textsuperscript{7} S.R. Mehrotra, op.cit., p. 139.

\textsuperscript{8} Taufique Kitchlew, \textit{Selected Works and Speeches of Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew}, Delhi, 1999, p. 65.
to resist the offensives of the Raj and its domestic allies in different parts of the subcontinent.\(^9\)

On the recommendation of the Rowlatt Committee, Government of India drafted two bills to replace the Defence of India Act. Despite widespread opposition of all the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council, except one, who was a member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council, one of the two bills giving the government draconian powers— the right to arrest, search and imprison any person without trial to establish special courts etc. became a law on 18 March 1919.\(^10\) The popular view of the Rowlatt Act was summed up in the slogan ‘\textit{na appeal, na daleel, na vakeel}. (no appeal, no argument, no advocate).

Suniti Kumar Ghosh further says that in a letter written in June 1919, Gandhi observed that “economic distress, political repression and an awakening among the masses had caused unrest of a deep-seated character” all over the world. Speaking of India he said that ‘it is an all-round unrest due to repression, famine and other causes.’ What was his panacea for it? He wrote “…… if the rapidly widespread growth of Bolshevism which is attacking one nation after another in Europe was to be successfully arrested in India and even


\(^10\) Ibid., p. 188.
possibility of its finding a congenial soil safeguarded against, it was necessary that the people of India shall be reminded of the legacy of their civilization and culture, which is comprised in one word ‘Satyagraha’- the highest mantra one can know of.11

Large protest meetings were undertaken by the people to came out of despair and Gandhi presented them hope. He issued his famous Satyagraha manifesto. A careful and thorough study of his of the Rowlatt report brought him to a conclusion that was just opposite to that of the government. The greatest alarm lay in the setting of the Bills. “Their introduction” said he, “is accompanied by certain assurances given by the Viceroy regarding the Civil Service and the British commercial interests,” which cut at the root of civilized government. The text of the manifesto was:

“Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. 1 of 1919 and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. 2 of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary right of individuals, on which the safety of the community as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such

11 Ibid.,
other laws as a committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit and we further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow the truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property.”

In the years immediately after the First World War the people of UP came under severe economic pressure. First there was a cut back in economic opportunities with the end of the war. Nearly half a million soldiers from UP, mostly from the rural areas, who had been recruited as combatants or non-combatants were now demobilized. There was also considerable industrial retrenchment with the closure of several mills and factories, especially tanneries and glass works.

It must also be passingly mentioned that in the summer of 1918 high prices and other causes produced a general feeling of uneasiness. The news of the formation of Police Battalions added to this and led to the formation of local Sewa Samitis for night – patrolling in Farrukhabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Rae Bareli, Etah, Mainpuri, Sitapur and a few other districts. There was general confusion regarding means and methods and a general desire for training in the use of arms. When this was refused, and when for purposes of co-ordination and cooperation, a “Civic Guard” scheme


was put forward by government which required volunteers to enroll under the Police Act, the effervescence quickly subsided and in most districts the movement came to an end. In Kanpur only a single patrol reported for training under the government scheme.\textsuperscript{14}

The Satyagraha agitation of 1919 showed the dangerous side of the Sewa Samiti movement and the necessity for rigorous control both local, and central, if the movement is to preserve a philanthropic character.\textsuperscript{15}

While the Rowlatt Act has caused already much indignation and people were getting restless. Attempts were made to disrupt transport and communication, to prevent the movement of troops; telegraph wires were cut, trains were stoned and railway stations set to fire in many places. Punjab was most restless. To cow the people Martial Law (15 April-19 June) remained enforced in 5 districts of Punjab namely Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwala, Lyallpur (now Faisalabad) and Gujrat. All symbols of British authority like law courts, railway stations and government buildings became target of people’s attacks. At Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar, defenceless people-379 according to the official estimate and nearly 1000 according to

\textsuperscript{14} General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 604/1920, UPSA.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.,
the Congress Enquiry Committee report- were butchered and many hundreds were seriously wounded by General Dyer and his soldiers.\textsuperscript{16}

Kanpur witnessed mass upheaval during the year 1919. A flow of anger swept the country following the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. A ‘Mourning Week’ was observed from April 6-13 in the memory of those who were slaughtered. In city’s Shraddhanand Park, a meeting was called by Murari Lal Rohatgi without the prior permission of the city administration. These meetings became a regular feature and stalwarts of the city like- Narayan Prasad Arora, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi used to deliver fiery speeches

\textsuperscript{16} It was Baisakhi day of Amritsar. Thousands of Sikhs and Jats had assembled here from distant places unaware of government proclamations. General Dyer had come over from Jalandhar on April 11 with his brigade and had occupied the town on 12\textsuperscript{th}. Martial Law already been proclaimed, on hearing that a crowd had assembled at the Bagh he at once reached the spot. People numbered about sixteen to twenty thousand. They were all collected inside the Bagh which is a square plot of land surrounded on all sides by houses and high walls with only four narrow entrances allowing not more than two persons to walk abreast.

On entering the spot Dyer had to left the armoured cars outside because it was too narrow and then immediately proceeded to a high ground, deployed his troops to the right and the left, and within 30 seconds opened fire. It continued for 10 minutes from time to time he directed it against where the crowd was the most. And firing went on till the ammunition ran short. About 1650 rounds were fired. Some five to six hundreds were killed outright and about three times of that number were wounded. There was no warning no demonstration, \textit{The Indian Annual Register}, op.cit., pp. 40-41. Also see Suniti Kumar Ghosh, op.cit., p. 193.
which had an electrifying effect on the people. Funds were also collected for the construction of a memorial at Jallianwala Bagh.  

The call for a week strike (hartal) from April 6-13 was so effective that not a single tonga or horse-cart could be found in the city.

Respectable people wished to observe April 6 quietly. The Muslims at first would have nothing to do with the observance of the day, but on April 5 night a few Muslims of no standing signed a notice which was issued on Sunday morning. All shops were shut, the general idea being that it was safer to remain shut. There was no interference with ekkas and tongas. Some persons, including the civic Guards, posted themselves at the bridge and sent away people bringing in grass for sale.

Two meetings were held on 6 April - one at 7:30 a.m. of about 7000 and one at 5 p.m. of about 70,000. The meetings were organized by the city Congress committee which was headed by Murarilal Rohatgi. There was a small stampede caused by some

---


18 Ibid.,

19 General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 262/1919, UPSA.
Bengalis being mistaken for soldiers, but otherwise the day passed without any unpleasant incident.\textsuperscript{20}

Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi and Kashi Nath were among those most prominent in making the arrangements. Notices were circulated asking people to close shops and explaining the evils of the Bill, but the Bills do not appear to have been well understood, as well-to-do people were heard to explain that they were the police power to arrest any 5 persons found gathered together.\textsuperscript{21}

On March 30, Swami Keshaw Ram presided at a protest meeting. Hindus and Muslims being equally represented. Som Prakash, a lawyer and who had participated in the Home Rule Movement spoke at length and breadth about the provisions of the bill considered to be draconian by him. March 30, was apparently kept as a day of fast. On April 6 the shops in the city were closed, cajolery, taunts and threats having been used to those who did not wish to close.\textsuperscript{22}

An interesting event is associated with this *hartal*. In city’s Prithvinath school the teachers closed all the doors of the school from outside and remained sitting with sticks in their hand. Haldhar Vajpayee a 14 year student of the school however was very cautious

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.,
and as soon as he saw an opportunity he immediately went towards the school bell and starting hammering it with a hammer. The ringing of the bell led students to ran towards the compound and suddenly a large number of them had gathered and they started shouting slogans like *Hartal Karo Hartal Karo* and *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai*. This event marked the making of a revolutionary in Haldhar Vajpayee.\(^{23}\)

Another factor of importance in the rise of popular political agitation in UP at the beginning of the 1920s was the presence of a substantial Muslim population in UP towns. This was a relic of Muslim rule in northern India, when Muslims had congregated at the administrative centres and others around these centres had adopted the religion of the court. In 1921, Muslims constituted 14.5 per cent of the population in UP, Their proportion among urban dwellers was however much higher, over 37 per cent.\(^ {24}\)

**The Beginning of Khilafat Agitation**

For much of the period of British rule Muslims from Bengal and Punjab contributed little to specifically Muslim politics, their politicians preferring to use other platforms. UP Muslims were however more politically conscious. They mainly founded and, with

\(^ {24}\) The Gyanendra Pandey Omnibus, op.cit., p. 20.
the exception of the Bombay-based Jinnah mainly led the organizations which represented the Muslim interest in Indian politics. The Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College (MAO) founded by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan at Aligarh nurtured a whole generation of Muslim League politicians. He followed this with the establishment of the All-India Muslim Educational Conference in 1886, which helped him impress his political will on Indian Muslims. Muslims of UP had played a very prominent role in the foundation of Muslim League at Dacca in 1906. The secretaryship was the most powerful position in the party and between 1906 and 1910 it was held by UP Muslims in Aligarh, and between 1910 and 1926 by UP Muslims in Lucknow.25 The strength of Muslim agitational prowess was already discovered in the Kanpur Machchli Bazar Mosque agitation of 1913. Muslim political consciousness magnified by Islam’s humiliation abroad and plights within, had transformed the Indian Muslims from a body of petitioners into assertive agitators. They started desiring for a self government which can mould itself to Indian conditions and notions of ultra loyalist and conservatism stood condemned. The Hindu-Muslim rapprochement, which had acquired a new pace since 1890’s was finally sealed in the famous ‘Lucknow Pact’ (December 1916) in

which Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mohammad Ali Jinnah had played prominent roles.²⁶

In the aftermath of the First World War the Ottoman Empire which was the last surviving symbol of Muslim power was on the verge of disintegration. The Sultan was designated as Khalifa or Caliph.²⁷ The impact of the disintegration of Ottoman Empire on the seventy million Muslims of British India (though greatly dispersed and fragmented) was disturbing. The Ottomans once ruled over large Christian lands in east Europe and had outlasted the Mughal and Safavid empires. As Islam’s only surviving pride and especially for those Muslims who were under foreign subjugation and that it was considered to be strong enough to resist European challenge Muslims of the sub-continent were sad to see it succumbing to British juggernaut and with its disintegration the position of Caliphate was also in danger. In this way Turkey was Indian Muslims’ last hope and they couldn’t see it going down. So the fear of its dismemberment at the end of the First World War in November 1918, combined with other factors, engulfed the greater part of

²⁷ The Caliph, successor to the Prophet was also Amir- ul-Momineen (Leader of the faithful) and this exalted title convey the symbolic importance of the Caliphate (Khilafat). In theory the Caliph was both the spiritual and temporal leader of the Sunni Muslims.
British India in an intense agitation for the preservation of Turkey’s sovereignty and integrity.\(^{28}\)

The vexed question of Khilafat (Caliphate) came up, after Turkey was humiliated in the First World War. Behind the Khilafat movement were the rumours about a harsh peace treaty being imposed on the Ottoman Emperor who was still regarded as the Khalifa or the spiritual head of the Islamic world. There arose a need for forming a religious cum political organization which was to be untainted by past policies of loyalist or elitist constitutionalism and should represent the widest political spectrum of Indian Muslim opinion. The first novel step taken in this direction was taken in Bombay by a group of notably loyal and pious men. A large public meeting of about 15000 Muslims was held in the city on 20 March 1919 and a Khilafat Committee was formed. The person who presided over the meeting was a wealthy local businessman and a very devout Muslim, Seth Mian Haji Jan Muhammad Chotani.\(^{29}\) The movement launched by a Khilafat Committee formed in Bombay, had three main demands: the Khalifa must retain control over the Muslim holy places; he must be left with his pre-war territories so that he

\(^{28}\) M. Naeem Quraishi, op.cit ., See Introduction.

\(^{29}\) Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, Delhi, 1982, pp. 72-73. (Mian Haji Jan Muhammad Chotani (1873-1932) belonged to Halai Memon community. He had grown up in religious surroundings and was a prosperous government contractor and timber merchant of Bombay.)
could maintain his position as the head of the Islamic world; and the Jazirat- ul- Arab (Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Palestine) must not be under non-Muslim sovereignty. P. C. Bamford says, “The end of the war saw a steadily increasing pan-Islamic agitation in India regarding the ultimate fate of the Khilafat (Caliphate). In the early months of 1920 violent speeches were made in different Khilafat conferences and there were talks of jehad or holy war against the infidels (British).”

The year 1919 was one of trial and error in Indian politics. The Hindu-Muslim alliance was cemented as did two new Muslim political bodies; the All India Khilafat Committee and the Jamiat Ulema- I- Hind.

A large section of Muslims were brimming with anger when the proposals of the Treaty Of Sevres became known, the fundamental one being the abolition of Khilafat. In May the publication of the Turkish Peace Terms, emanating from the Conference at San Remo, caused excitement in India and seems to have been the cause of a meeting of the leaders of all parties at Allahabad which on 2 June

---

31 Gail Minault, op.cit., p. 67.
32 In May 1920 the treaty of Sevres, depriving Turkey of the Arab Lands, (where the holiest shrines of the Muslims are situated as well as of Thrace, Smyrna and Armenia) was made public. The petitions of the Khilafatists and of Gandhi to the viceroy and the representations of a Khilafatist delegation to London proved futile. The treaty not only curbed the temporal powers of the Sultan of Turkey, who had been a war-time ally of Germany but deprived him of his spiritual powers also.
1920 after some very acrimonious discussion, passed the resolution given below

“This meeting reaffirms the movement of Non-Cooperation in accordance with the four stages already approved by the Central Khilafat committee and appoints a sub-committee consisting of the following gentlemen with power to add to their number to give practical effect to the movement without further delay.”

Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Muhammad Ali. Mr Ahmad Haji Siddik Khattari, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and Maulana Hasrat Mohani were the main leaders who pressed for action. The four stages of Non-Cooperation referred to were-

1.) The resignation of titles and honorary posts.
2.) The resignation of posts in Civil services of Government, the police being excluded.
3.) The resignation of service in the Police and the Army.
4.) The refusal to pay taxes.33

Already the *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Act was in full swing. The Seva samitis had performed exemplary work among the

---

masses. Volunteers were sometimes posted at railway stations to assist travellers.\textsuperscript{34}

Another activity was the deputation of volunteers to political and public meetings to assist in keeping order and to supply water and refreshments to those present. A large account appeared in the Press of the part played by the Allahabad and Kanpur \textit{sewa samitis} during the 1919 Muharram and Ramlila celebrations. They seem to have been employed chiefly to demonstrate the Hindu-Muslim amity which characterized these celebrations.\textsuperscript{35}

The coming of the Khilafat question at a time when the \textit{satyagraha} against the Punjab wrong doings and Rowlatt Bill was going on was a shot in the arm for the nationalists. Ever since his arrival in India from his South African \textit{satyagraha} campaign, Gandhi was, to use his own words ‘seeking the friendship of good Mussalmans and was eager to understand the Muslim mind through contact with their purest and most patriotic representatives.\textsuperscript{36} Verily Gandhi realized that the opportunity to foster a solid Hindu-Muslim unity had arrived and the two pressing issues should be mingled into one so as to project a mass oriented movement hitherto unseen since

\textsuperscript{34} GAD, File No. 604.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{36} Quoted in Ram Gopal, \textit{Indian Muslims: A Political History 1858-1947}, Bombay, 1959, p. 140.
the Swadeshi movement of 1905. Gandhi had been keeping in touch with the Ali Brothers (Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali) and had been sympathetic to the cause of Khilafat arrived at a concord and the genesis of Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movement took place.\textsuperscript{37}

At the Khilafat conference at Delhi in November 1919, Gandhi for the first time introduced the concept of non-cooperation when the Khilafat leaders were taking counsel together about the means of putting pressure on the government. The Khilafat Conference also resolved to withdraw cooperation from government unless the Khilafat question was satisfactorily settled and this resolution was framed on the advice of Gandhi who was one of the first of the Hindu leaders definitely to associate himself with the Khilafat issue.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, K.N. Pannikar, \textit{India’s Struggle For Independence}, Delhi, 1988, p. 185. Gandhi was also an astute political observer. He clearly saw that there had been a new awakening among the Muslims and they are willing to pour it into the national movement and it will coincide eventually with the goal of the Indian National Congress. Significantly therefore he told the first Khilafat Conference of Hindus and Muslims, “The Mussalmans have adopted a very important resolution. If the peace terms are unfavourable to them which may God forbid- they will stop all co-operation with Government. It is an inalienable right of the people thus to withhold co-operation. We are not bound to retain government titles and honours or to continue in government service. If government should betray us in a great cause like the Khilafat we could not do otherwise than non-cooperate.”, Ram Gopal, op.cit., pp. 141-142.

\textsuperscript{38} P.C. Bamford, op.cit, p. 13.
But it was not that the Khilafat movement appealed universally to all the Muslims. There was also opposition in certain influential quarters. A general meeting of the members of Anjuman-I- Arkanul Avadh Lucknow was held on the 17 March 1920 at the house of N. S. Mohammed Shafi Khan, Secretary to United Provinces Government, to consider the situation arising out of the Khilafat question. It was resolved that the meeting in which members of Ex-Royal Family as well as wazir’s family of Avadh also took part (in this organization) that although they sympathize with the cause but cannot sever their ties or connections with the British government which will be detrimental to the interests of Muslims of India.39

The Kanpur Hindu Mahasabha also entirely disassociated itself with the resolution passed at the public meeting held on 9 April 1920, urging withdrawal of cooperation with the Government in case an adverse decision is arrived at regarding the Khilafat question.40

The Hindu Mahasabha was also critical of the resolutions passed by the Conference of Ulemas held in the city which it believed were to overstep the limits of constitutional agitation and if they were carried out were to be a serious threat to the orderly progress of the country. The Mahasabha like the Anjuman-i-Arkanul

39 General Administration Department (GAD), File No. 189/1920, UPSA.
40 Ibid.,
expressed its sympathy with the Muslim feelings yet was of the opinion that agitation and protests will neither be in the interests of the country nor of the Muslims.41

Like the Sewa Samitis of the Congress a new association of volunteers was raised by the Khilafat Committee which came to be known as the ‘National Volunteers’. The members of this corp. were of a militant and aggressive nature and were to act as torchbearers in galvanizing the people against the policies of the government. Further they were regularly addressed by local leaders so that their morale was kept high. The fusion of the Sewa Samiti and National Volunteer members to work as a one body had its positive result though when the movement came to an abrupt end in February 1922 the members acquired a distinct communal trait as they had became directionless and to channelize their energy and many of them actively indulged in instigating communal riots- a sorry and very disturbing feature for such once patriotic and committed people who had offered the highest level of social services to their countrymen.

The number of Muslim and other Congress volunteers is difficult to calculate separately as there was not always a clear distinction between local Khilafat and Congress organizations. After November 1921, when the Criminal Law Amendment Act was

41Ibid.,
applied to UP and volunteer associations were declared unlawful, there
seems to have been an even closer merger of the ‘two
denominations’ at the town and district level. This act of government
gave a great fillip to the nationalist volunteer effort in general. The
government was ‘disobeyed, volunteer organizations failed to dissolve
and fresh enlistments under the direction of the Congress leaders
were made in large numbers’, the Intelligence department reported.
‘The strength of the congress organization now stood revealed and
was reflected by the large response to the call for volunteers in all
districts’.42

In Kanpur, the Khilafat Movement spread rapidly among the
low paid artisan dwellers of of the town who largely occupied in the
leather and tanning industries, had downed tools in the winter of
1919 due to the inadequacy of their wages. It was they who
depressed by the strain of the war years, provided the Khilafat
leaders with a fertile ground for propaganda. These people were
easily swayed to religious passion and Khilafat leaders found a
receptive audience susceptible to their type of leadership. As the
tempo of the movement quickened, Kanpur became the centre of the
agitation.

Increasing nationalist activity was sending shockwaves to the government. Kanpur saw enthusiasm but leaders like Murari Lal Rohatgi who had worked out the programme were hesitant to take things too far so as to provide the government an opportunity to strike with an iron hand. The Kanpur Sewa Samiti took upon itself the duty of supplying drinking water to persons attending the Khilafat Day meeting. In June 1920, an All India Khilafat conference at Allahabad resolved to give effect to Non-Cooperation without further delay— the Viceroy however was given a month’s warning.\footnote{General Administration Department (GAD), File. No. 636/1920, UPSA.}

**Launching of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements**

The Non-Cooperation Movement was finally inaugurated on August 1, 1920. The movement had practically based itself on an entire gamut of Gandhian ideals and was the first and perhaps the last example of a complete Hindu-Muslim solidarity. Many local stalwarts of the city like- Pt. Rambharose Tripathi, poet Balkrishna Sharma ‘Naveen’ and others gave up their teaching profession and became full time freedom fighters. Narayan Prasad Arora who had joined the nationalist activity as a full time activist in 1916 only, resigned from his post as headmaster of Marwari College.\footnote{Kanpur Ka Itihaas, op.cit., p. 14.}
The first boycott movement in Kanpur was started in October 1920 after the Calcutta session (4-8 September 1920) of the Indian National Congress. It was attended by leaders like Murarilal Rohatgi, Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi, Ram Prasad Mishra and Maulana Hasrat Mohani from Kanpur. The resolution regarding the Progressive Non-violent non-cooperation, when was opposed by the leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya, Bipin Chandra Pal, C.R. Das, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Motilal Nehru and Annie Besant, who supported by the leaders of the United Provinces, the chief amongst them were Motilal Nehru and Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi. Leaders like Malaviya, Jinnah, Motilal and Lajpat Rai were also quiet nervous about Gandhi’s mass mobilization fearing it would unleash a force that would be difficult to control. Their fears were compounded by his efforts to forge a Hindu-Muslim front, making religious identity as the fulcrum of nationalism.\(^4\)

The City Congress Committee had appointed a sub-Committee to conduct and supervise the work of the Boycott movement. Foreign

---

\(^4\) These leaders were firm believers in constitutional methods of agitation and wanted the Congress to work out the reforms envisaged in the Act of 1919. They believed that the Gandhian programme of progressive non-violent non co-operation is unimaginative. Yet in spite of their opposition Gandhi’s resolution was passed by a large majority in the session, 1855 votes out of 2728 being in his favour, Subhash Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 44.

cloth worth crores of rupees was sealed and it effectively stopped its sale. In this enterprise of the city Congress the local cloth merchants and brokers gave their full support to the movement.\textsuperscript{47}

Jawaharlal Nehru was in support of picketing when he visited Kanpur and his consent for the same made the masses more enthusiastic and boycott was now being carried in full swing. Stalwarts of the local Congress committee like Krishna Dutt Paliwal and Mannilal Awasthi were the leading lights of the movement. Slogans glorifying patriotism and nationalist songs were rendered and sing by them so as to galvanize the masses. Along with the picketing there was also a great zeal for organizing public bonfires of foreign clothes. The satyagrahis enthusiastically carried this programme going from house to house asking for and collecting foreign made clothes. Both Mannilal and Paliwal were supervising the programme. The Kapda Bazar area of the city was a prominent centre of these leaders’ activities.\textsuperscript{48}

The Congress supported Gandhi’s plan for non-cooperation with the Government till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were removed and swaraj is not attained. People were asked by the leaders to boycott Government run educational institutions and aided schools and

\textsuperscript{47} Lakshmikant Tripathi (ed), \textit{Abhinandan Granth; Narayan Prasad Arora}, Kanpur, 1951, Section IV, pp. 27-28.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 28
colleges, law courts, and legislatures and to have a penchant for hand weaving and hand spinning for producing Khadi. These decisions were endorsed at the annual session of the Congress held at Nagpur in December 1920.

Swami Satya Deo visited Kanpur on 14 October and gave a speech which reflected on the harms British rule had brought on the country.\textsuperscript{49} He opened his speech by highlighting the virtues for which the English nation is known yet the yardstick it applies in India is exactly opposite of it. He said that, “The English nation can never help any other nation to the detriment of its self interest and selfishness, but where another nation is to be injured anyhow and it has to attain its own object it will go there.” His speech also recalled the policy of mendicancy that was followed by the early nationalists to secure concessions from the government but all was in vain. The Indians readily rendered their support to Britain with men and money in the war and Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy went at great

\textsuperscript{49} Satya Deo Parivrajak (also known as Swami Satya Deo) was born in Ludhiana in 1874 in a middle class Khatri family. He served the Government for a few days and after having resigned his job, he joined the D.A.V. College at Lahore. He had been deeply influenced by his contact with Swami Ram Tirth in religious matters and with Lala Lajpat Rai and Gopal Krishna Gokhale in political field. Equally powerful was the influence of Dayanand Saraswati on him. When Non Cooperation Movement began he was immediately drawn towards Mahatma Gandhi. He died in 1961, For details see Hassan Imam, ‘Satya Dev Sanyasi: A Biography of a Forgotten Political Activist’, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Kolkata session, 2010, pp. 713-723.
lengths to secure it yet what has happened he asked. Satya Deo was particularly incensed at the Punjab wrong doings and at the same time highlighted the issue of Khilafat and the injustice done to the Muslims. He made references to Maulana Mohammad Ali, Mahatma Gandhi and Vithalbhai J Patel as men who have seen the hypocrisry of England and other European nations regarding India. Extolling the people to pursue ‘Might is Right’ he recalled an incident that in America whenever any white man used to beat him he used to give him a sound thrashing and then he used to become his friend. The audience burst into laughter on hearing this. He further said that, “God has in this country has created in our hearts a high idea and noble principle which has been established by the demonstration of rishis. The principle is that when anyone does injustice to us today it is our duty that we should not cooperate with him and be a partner to the injustice and that we should be of firm mind and should resist it with soul power. This is the principle of non cooperation.” In fact his speech carried the entire agenda of the Khilafat and Non Cooperation movements. He also urged people to ask many Rai Bahadurs and Rai Sahibs of Kanpur to gave up their titles which are nothing but a mark of dishonour. There was a strong need for Hindu-Muslim amity and he also praised Murari Lal Rohatgi who
gave up his Council title. He interestingly called the Councils as ‘rice to ensnare pigeons.’

On November 23, 1920 Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi (who was editor of the Pratap newspaper) released the first daily edition. There had been a massive wave of political consciousness amongst the farmers of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) and they decided to organize themselves against the landlords (taluqdars and Zamindars) who were resorting to evil practices. Farmers organized under the Kisan Sabha rose in revolt. Brutal firing in Rae Bareli district led to the death of scores of farmers. This issue was courageously taken up by Vidhyarthi in his Pratap. Incensed at the growing popularity of the newspaper and that it was vociferously taking up the issues of farmers and workers, deeply disturbed the government and consequently a lot of seditious charges were imposed on the newspaper. Hence the daily edition had to be closed down on July 6, 1921, but the weekly Pratap continued.

Meanwhile embers were burning after the Non Cooperation movement had thrown up a novel set of nationalist programme and the alliance with the Khilafatists had brought a new energy and dynamism among the people.

50 Home Police Department, File No. 104N/1920, UPSA.
Displaying of swords by the Muslim volunteers and Seva Samiti workers was a marked feature of the movement and was something which was not very pleasing to the government. Volunteers justified their action on the ground that after the publication of the new Arms Act Rules, in January 1920, the Mathura Sewa Samiti had advertised that anyone could now possess a sword.\(^{52}\)

Swords were also being carried by irregular volunteers in demonstrations and in honour of the extremist leaders. On the occasion when Maulana Mohammad Ali was passing through the city, a volunteer sat on the box seat of his carriage waving a naked sword in the air.\(^{53}\)

In November 1919, the Muslim volunteers of Agra were reported to be learning drill on Sundays. In the same month the Allahabad Sewa Samiti announced that training in drill was to be given to the Sewa Samiti volunteers as well as to the boy scouts. In May 1920, it was reported that at a private meeting of the Khilafat committee at Kheri it had been decided to prepare uniforms for the volunteers and to give them military training. In the previous month it had been reported that the Muslim volunteers of Kanpur were to be taught drill twice a week and to be used as process

\(^{52}\) GAD, File No. 604.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.,
servers for the local Muslim tribunal established in connection with the Khilafat agitation.\textsuperscript{54}

Gandhi had inaugurated the ‘\textit{Swadeshi Bhandar}’ a shop set up by Maulana Hasrat Mohani in the city on January 21, 1920. The biggest centre in U.P. of the sale of indigenous goods. All through his life Mohani remained true to his conviction about using only indigenous goods. He was so particular about it that he once braved a very cold night, shivering at a friend’s place, where a soft foreign-made blanket had been, by mistake kept on the bed, meant for him. He was too moralistic to disturb his hosts late at night, and too principled to use that blanket against his convictions.\textsuperscript{55} This store had Murarilal Rohatgi, Vishwambhar Nath Tripathi and Jawaharlal Rohatgi as directors. These leaders presented addresses glorifying \textit{swadeshi} (printed on silk and khadi clothes) to Mahatma and Kasturba Gandhi respectively.\textsuperscript{56} It was Mahatma’s first visit to the city. Three exhibitions were organized at Balika Vidyalaya, Sarsys Ghat and Phoolbagh respectively by the Swadeshi Swarajya Fund League. The same year on October 14, Gandhi revisited the city and gave a speech at city’s Parade ground. The following is the translation of his speech-

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Ibid.,}\textsuperscript{54} \\
\textit{Muzaffar Hanafi, Hasrat Mohaani} (translated by Khadija Azeem), Delhi, 2004, p. 55. \\
\textit{Lakshmikant Tripathi (ed.),} op. cit., p. 29.
\end{flushright}
“Brethren, if you will please preserve a little order my voice may reach all brothers. You will excuse me for my inability to speak standing. It gives me great pleasure to see such a vast gathering, but at the same time I am not going to conceal my grief, my dear brethren, because we Hindus and Muslims want to get the Khilafat question settled, which means that we are going to engage in a contest with the mighty Empires of Europe, we want the Punjab injustice to be undone so that such incidents may not recur, and we want swaraj in India, and I must confess before you that swaraj is impossible for us so long as we do not acquire the capacity even to manage a large concourse. Touring throughout India I have observed that we do not possess organizing capacity. My first lesson in organizing such a huge meeting is that we may be able to work quietly. All of you, my brethren should bear in mind that if we want to carry on the administration of India ourselves we should develop as much capacity and administrative ability as the English possess. I have seen a vaster enemy than the gathering before me just now. I would tell you, brethren the first thing is opposition with the sword, but at present I am not going to oppose with the sword; rather I want to get this work done through non-cooperation. I want a discipline even more rigid than military discipline. If you cannot acquire that discipline I am sure you cannot get swaraj. I would therefore ask all brethren to consider how we can carry on our work in this vast gathering. We should bear in mind in the first place that those who are not connected with the management should not speak. God is kind and merciful towards us; we are on the path of truth and so
no serious accident happens to us and no one is killed- but it also happens that people die in such gatherings. If we want to get the Khilafat question settled and the Punjab question settled and to introduce swaraj in India, there should be sincere affection between Hindus and Muslims. Lip friendship will gain nothing for us. There should be heartfelt love between them. Just as it is to be found in two sons of the same mother. Our next duty is to realize that one lakh of Englishmen cannot continue to rule over us with the help of aeroplanes. They rule over us because of our help. If we withdrew our aid from it, the government would sink today. Therefore we have decided that we do not possess the power of the sword. Therefore we have also issued a manifesto and the Central Khilafat Committee, the Muslim League and the Congress have decided; we do not want the murder of a single Englishmen; we do not want Government buildings to be burnt. If we want to burn anything it is our own heart; remove it is our own body. If we want to sacrifice anything, it is our heart. When we acquire the power of sacrifice, we will be able to this Government. We have also decided this and all of you brethren know, the Congress, Muslim League and Khilafat Committee have all come to the conclusion and all have said that we should cease helping Government. We should henceforth accept no aid or favour from government. This is our heritage. This is the way to do that thing well, so we have decided that Government schools and colleges run with government money, Government courts, Government Legislative Councils are forbidden for us. On account of our slavery we have left our Swadeshi and so we should take swadeshi as our duty. We
should give small spinning wheels to our mothers. We should take yarn from our mothers and get our weavers to weave them into coarse or fine cloth. We should use that cloth. If we are to do so much work, if we have to make so much sacrifice—sacrifice our ease and luxury for our country, for Islam and for the Hindu faith as the danger which is threatening Islam today is as much for Hinduism— if we want to save Hinduism and Islam, if we want to free this country from poverty, people are dying and everywhere is want of grain, and if we want to save them also for a time, we should establish small mills in our houses.

Citizens and leaders of Cawnpore, I therefore appeal most respectfully to you that if you have the good of your country at heart you should bid good-bye to ease and luxury and sacrifice yourselves. In the name of God, in the name of the country, do this work for India, for Islam and for Hinduism. Truth is on our side, and God is on the side of truth. But God also sides with truth and helps it only when it is accompanied by sacrifice. Truth can achieve little. Sacrifice is the crucible of truth. This proposition is so clear for you, my people of Cawnpore, that you will not care what other parts of India are or are not doing and will discharge the duty with which you have been entrusted."

The essence of Gandhi’s speech reflects his programme for the Non-Cooperation movement and also outlines his philosophy, the kind

of politics he pursued based as they were on the twin principles of truth (\textit{satya}) and non-violence (\textit{ahimsa}).

Kanpur responded to Gandhi’s call with much vigour. The Rashtriya Kanyakubja Vidhyalaya which was established as a centre for national education during the movement stands as a testimony to city’s brush with nationalism. Its founder was Pt. Mannilal Awasthi who had resigned as headmaster of Kanyakubja College. Murari Lal Rohatgi resigned his membership of city Municipal Board. Maulana Hasrat Mohani galvanized the Muslims of the city against the dubious policies of the British government and called for boycotting all English made products. Murari Lal Rohatgi also gave up his title of ‘Rai Bahadur’.\textsuperscript{58}

Pt. Ramashankar Awasthi brought out a daily called ‘\textit{Vartman}’ in the year 1920, a few months before Pratap was also converted into a daily newspaper. Mujtaba Hussain, an employee of the Court of Wards had confiscated a large amount of government money and handed it to the revolutionaries who spent it on procuring arms from foreign countries. This was in the year 1921. Later Mujtaba was arrested.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Kanpur Ka Itihaas}, op.cit., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 60.
The visible signs of Hindu-Muslim unity was the most disturbing and discerning feature to the colonial government. Kanpur was a thriving city with a Hindu majority and a large Muslim population and the promising note of the Non-Cooperation-Khilafat movements had made it a hotbed of nationalist agitation. Age old disputes of cow-slaughter and music before the mosques were settled amicably. Communal harmony and political unity prevailed and above all there was a bonhomie between Congress, Khilafatists and Muslim League.\(^{60}\)

The programme of boycott of law courts was brilliantly taken up by Pt Jagjiwan Ram Tiwari when most other lawyers were quite reluctant to take the plunge. He gave up his practice. The local Congress committee was much impressed by his sacrifice and as a reward deputed him to solve the disputes of local people in the city and villages as a ‘judge’ and he became famous by the name of ‘Judge Saab’ in the city.\(^{61}\)

Gandhi again visited the city on August 8, 1921. His visit gave a boost to the already going movement. Many leaders were arrested. Narayan Prasad Arora was given six months’ imprisonment and was

---


\(^{61}\) Lakshmikant Tripathi (ed.), op.cit., p. 27.
sent to Agra jail. Jawahar Lal Rohatgi too were arrested and sent to the jail for the first time in December 1921. He was sent to Lucknow Central Jail and given an imprisonment of 18 months. His associates in the jail included- Motilal Nehru, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, J.B. Kripalani, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Mahadev Desai, Purshottam Das Tandon and others.\(^2\) Dev Narayan Pandey a Congress activist was among the front ranking agitators in the Non-Cooperation Movement and was arrested in 1921 for giving a seditious speech against the British government.\(^3\)

The All India Congress Committee, meeting at Bezwada on 13 March 1921 passed resolution calling upon all workers to concentrate their attention chiefly on (I) Collecting one crore of rupees for the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund. (II) Enlisting a crore of members and (III) Introducing 20 lakh charkhas (Spinning wheels) into Indian household- all this before 30 June 1921.

This new programme got tremendous support in Kanpur and in the meeting of Congress Committee held in January 1922 it was decided to extol workers and volunteers with a renewed energy and it did materialize as volunteers wholeheartedly took it and level of enthusiasm and excitement among the people was indeed unique.


Maulana Hasrat Mohani never at ease with the policies of the government presided over a vast gathering at city’s Khurd Mahal Park and highlighted the significance of swadeshi. In a meeting held under the leadership of Maulana Hasrat Mohani it was decided to collect money for Tilak Swaraj Memorial Fund as well as to popularize Khadi. It is difficult to give the exact figure of collection of money from Kanpur but it appears, however as and when United Provinces (U.P.) raised nearly Rs 600,000 for this fund between January 1921 and June 1922 Kanpur might have a fairly good amount of share in it.64

In the 1920s a significant development took place in the Congress organization. This was the establishment of Congress Committees at various levels. Each town with a population of 50,000 was to have a Town Congress Committee (TCC) and there were provisions for a mandal (circle), tahsil and District Congress Committee (DCC). This infrastructure of the Congress organization provided the link in the field of political activity and propaganda. Further with the introduction of an open membership with a fee of 4 annas per annum, without any other qualification the Congress was able to acquire a popular base.65

64 Home Political Department, File No. 741/1922, NAI.
65 Gyanendra Pandey, Omnibus, op.cit., p. 29.
Non-educational public (or social) service organizations that emerged in the Non-Cooperation years also provided valuable support for the nationalist movement. One that was of special importance in UP was Lala Lajpat Rai’s *Lok Seva Mandal*. It was modeled on Gopal Krishna Gokhale’s Servants of India Society but more openly political, the *Mandal* was officially inaugurated by Gandhi at Lahore on 9 November 1921. Lajpat Rai was president of the Society from then until his death in 1928. He was succeeded by Purshottam Das Tandon of Allahabad and UP Congress leader. Partly owing to a shortage of funds and partly on account of great selectivity the society remained a small band of trained public workers maintained by the Society and working full-time in an allotted sphere. In UP, Meerut, Allahabad and Kanpur were the chief centres of *Lok Seva Mandal* activity.66

A brief mention should also be made of a firebrand Congress activist Hamid Khan who had entered the nationalist agitation at the young age of 19 in the year 1919. He served six months in jail in the year 1921 for leading a crowd against the British Government in city’s Nai Sadak area. He also went to Nagpur in the year 1923 to participate in the ‘Flag Satyagraha’ and was subsequently arrested and

---

66 Ibid., p. 51.
was given a rigorous imprisonment of one year in the Nagpur Central Jail.\(^{67}\)

The hysteria generated by Non-Cooperation Movement in the city was amazing and at par with some of the other cities in the United Provinces. It had accepted the entire gamut of Gandhian programme and the greatest success was visible in the boycott of government school and colleges. The boycott of foreign cloth was perhaps the most novel feature in Kanpur and this continued at a rapid pace until the country achieved independence in 1947. Students in large numbers left these institutions. The Tilak Swaraj Fund was also handsomely contributed in Kanpur and popularization of khadi took place. But above all the most promising and novel feature of the movement was Hindu-Muslim unity (which sadly was not to be repeated afterwards).

The sordid episode of the burning of 22 policemen at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur forced Gandhi to call off the movement. Voices of dissension rose in the Congress and Kanpur also felt sad and dejected at the sudden call of withdrawal. The Congress party for time being was left in the margins and revolutionary groups started becoming active in the city.

\(^{67}\) Arvind Arora, op.cit., p. 175.
Jawaharlal Nehru had visited the city in March 1922 and had already given his consent to start picketing as soon he arrives. Senior leaders like K.D. Paliwal and Mannilal Awasthi once again came in the forefront and accompanied by a band of satyagrahis picketed the shops of two famous cloth merchants known for selling foreign cloth - Phool Chand Fateh Chand and Sardarmal Hardutt Rai.\textsuperscript{68} That the movement went on despite Gandhi had called off the Non-Cooperation is a reflection of a new energy and vigour among the people of Kanpur who were now completely wedded to the cause of independence.

Meanwhile Maulana Hasrat Mohani who had asked for azaadi-i-kamil or complete independence (the first Indian to do so) at the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in 1921 displayed a change in his attitude during his trial in the Ahmedabad sessions court on the morning of 4\textsuperscript{th} May before F.X. D’souza, Sessions Judge of Ahmedabad.\textsuperscript{69}

Maulana thundered and said that he had not committed any offence and if the government is so much concerned and worried about his making of a statement then they must create a new section

\textsuperscript{68} Pratap, 10.4.1922.
\textsuperscript{69} The Motherland, 5.5.1922.
if they wanted to penalize his legitimate expression of opinion in favour of independence.\(^70\)

Admission to the court was by ticket but it was fully occupied by several Congressmen of Ahmedabad and workers. Also present at the trial were Kasturba Gandhi and Begum Hasrat Mohani.\(^71\)

The jury having been empanelled, Mr. Kemp the prosecuting counsel addressing them said the attainment of swaraj as such was not an offence because it might mean self-government within the British Empire, but the accused had labored to such an extent to define swaraj as meaning nothing but complete independence of all foreign control and he had so emphasized that “the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs” could not be righted till British imperialism had been defeated and till India attaines complete independence. Kemp further said that there was a clear intention to create disaffection against the government established by law and order in India. Maulana however was undaunted and a two years rigorous imprisonment was pronounced for him.\(^72\) The heroism and determination of another Kanpur stalwart had been superbly demonstrated.

Although the movement had been withdrawn the local Congress committee in the city earnestly carried the propagation of swadeshi

---

\(^70\) Ibid.,

\(^71\) Ibid.,

\(^72\) Ibid.,
and boycott of foreign goods. Popularization of khaddar was vigorously being carried out and volunteers were leaving no stone unturned to make it successful. Those shops selling foreign cloth were constantly being picketed and dharna was staged. The result was there was an increase in the number of shops selling khaddar and people of the city also increasingly starting adopting it. Numerous signboards displaying slogans highlighting the benefit of khaddar sprang up and they helped in sharpening the nationalist ideals of the people.\textsuperscript{73}

The local Congress committee also tried to form a committee of Marwari bazaar cloth merchants to help it in carrying out the programme but it was not successful and so it then formed a general committee of merchants. To collect sufficient money for Tilak Swarajya Fund (the fund was established after the death of B.G. Tilak to finance Congress programmes) the committee had placed \textit{gullaks} (piggy banks or earthen pots used by children to collect money) on various shops and requested the shopkeepers to liberally contribute to the fund from their collections.\textsuperscript{74}

At the Gaya Congress, held at the end of 1922, C. R. Das, who presided urged a change of policy. He proposed that the

\textsuperscript{73} Pratap, 5.6.1922.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.,
Congress should contest elections and enter Legislative councils, not to accept office but to carry on there “uniform, continuous and consistent opposition to the Government.” According to his plan, Congressmen instead of boycotting the elections, would stand as candidates at the polls and after capturing the elected seats, would carry on a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent opposition to the government. The earlier programme of boycotting of the legislatures (envisaged in the Calcutta session of 1920) had proved to be a failure. Because the nationalists had kept themselves withdrawn from the legislatures many selfish and undesirable elements had captured these bodies.75 On the defeat of his proposal by a section of Congressmen led by C. Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel, Das resigned Presidentship of the Congress and on 1 January 1923 announced the formation of the Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party (better known later as the Swaraj Party.) together with Motilal Nehru. Loud and bitter were the squabbles between the two sections of the Congress leadership. The famous controversy between the ‘Pro Changers’ (who later came to be called as Swarajists and who were for council-entry progamme) and ‘No Changers’ (those who

75 Subhash Chandra Bose, op.cit., p. 78.
adhered to Gandhian ‘constructive programme’\textsuperscript{76} over the council entry became bitter in some parts and there was a danger of another split looming as had taken place at Surat in 1907. Pressure began to develop on both the Pro and No-Changers to stop their bickerings.\textsuperscript{77}

The leaders of both the groups realized that this bickering will do only harm and the need of the hour is mutual accommodation. The need for unity was felt very strongly by all the Congressmen and both the groups also fully accepted the need of Gandhi’s leadership. Consequently in a special session of the Congress held at Delhi in September 1923, the Congress suspended all propaganda against council-entry and allowed the Congressmen to stand as candidates and exercise their franchise in forthcoming elections.\textsuperscript{78}

The U.P. Provincial Congress which was held at Dehradun (two months before the Gaya Congress of December 1922), when C.R. Das had enunciated his famous formula that swaraj must be for the ‘masses’ and not for the ‘classes’ alone was wholeheartedly supported

\textsuperscript{76} The constructive programme included hand-spinning and hand-weaving, removal of untouchability, communal unity, extension of national education, suppression of the drug traffic and establishment of arbitration boards- without voluntarily violating any law or governmental ordinance existing at the time.

\textsuperscript{77} Bipan Chandra, op.cit., pp. 235-236.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p.238.
by the leaders from Kanpur.\textsuperscript{79} The branch of Swaraj Party in Kanpur was formed due to the efforts of Narayan Prasad Arora, mannilal Awasthi, Krishna Dutt Paliwal and Gangadhar Ganesh Jog in the year 1924.\textsuperscript{80}

**Formation of Communist Party**

The Russian Revolution of 1917 had a lasting impact on the colonized countries and it gave a spurt to the revolutionary ideals. India was not to be left behind. Marx and Lenin became venerated leaders of the Indian revolutionaries. Kanpur saw its first propounder of Marxism and the man who in fact popularized the communist literature in the city was Radha Mohan Gokul who was earlier associated with Bengal’s *Anushilan Samiti*. He used to wander in an attire of a *sanyasi* (hermit). He was also a firebrand nationalist along with being a communist just like Maulana Hasrat Mohani.\textsuperscript{81} The chief disciple of Radha Mohan Gokul was a man named Satyabhakta. He writes in his book ‘*Kranti Path ke Pathik*’-

“I my days in Kanpur were spent in the propagation of Communism but I also made it a point to include some values which are the chief characteristics of Indian culture and civilization. This made some self styled Communists agitated and they started giving

\textsuperscript{79} Pratap, 22.10.1922.  
\textsuperscript{80} *Kanpur Ke Prassidh Purush*, op.cit., p. 24.  
\textsuperscript{81} *Kanpur Ka Itihaas*, op.cit., p. 42.
me lectures on internationalism forgetting the fact that in the entire world in whichever country communism has triumphed there are differences amongst them regarding certain things and conditions also differ from country to country.  

Communist tenets were getting momentum in the city and the government was alarmed. The first arrests of communists who were to later figure in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, began as early as in May 1923, just at the time when the main Peshawar Conspiracy cases were concluding. These arrests were in fact a continuation of the campaign of anti communist repression started by the Peshawar cases. The strategy of the British imperialists in their attempt to destroy the rising communist movement was to discredit the patriotism of the communists, show them as agents of a foreign power and drive a wedge between them and the militant left-wing in the Congress and the national movement.

In fact shortly after the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, Satyabhakta had decided to organize a legal Communist Party. His view of looking at the Case led him to believe that to advocate Communism was not in itself illegal and that a Communist party could exist

---

82 Satyabhakta, Kranti Path ke Pathik, Mathura, 1973, p.47
without engaging in activities which the government would regard as subversive.\textsuperscript{84}

This period saw Gandhi putting emphasis on his ‘constructive work’- propogation of indigenous cloth or \textit{khadi}, working for the upliftment of Dalits and Hindu-Muslim unity. The Congress organization in the city was kept going due to the efforts of Narayan Prasad Arora, Jawahar Lal Rohatgi, Ganesh Shankar Vidhyanthi, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and others.

Pyarelal Agarwal a firebrand young nationalist was sympathetic to the cause of revolutionaries. He was actively involved in collecting funds for fighting the case of revolutionaries indicted in the Kakori Conspiracy Case.\textsuperscript{85} Pyarelal was a firm believer in Gandhian ideals. During the Non-Cooperation Movement when all the senior leaders of the city were put behind bars, Pyarelal took charge as the leader who would keep the momentum going in the city. He was a master in taking out processions and building up public opinion.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Pankaj Kumar, \textit{Communist Movement in India}, Delhi, 1989, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{85} The Kakori Train Robbery (also known as the Kakori Conspiracy Case) took place at Kakori near Lucknow on August 9, 1925. The idea of robbery was conceived by Ashfaqullah Khan and Ram Prasad Bismil who belonged to the Hindustan Republic Association (HRA, which after 1928 became the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association or HSRA) that was created to carry out revolutionary activities against the British Empire in India.

\textsuperscript{86} Arvind Arora, op.cit., p. 100.
Meanwhile trial in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case had commenced and 13 persons were indicted. They were Nalini Gupta, Shaukat Usmani, Sripad Amrit Dange, M. N. Roy, Singaravelu Chettiar, Ghulam Hussein, Ramcharan Lal Shukla, Muzaffar Ahmad, MPS Veluyadhan, Shamsuddin Hasan, Sampuranand, Satyabhakta and Dr. Manilal. The charge had been that they were seeking to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India by a complete separation of India from imperialist Britain by a violent revolution. That they were in league with the Afghan mujahidin (revolutionary fighters) to stage a violent revolution. Of the thirteen accused, five were exonerated. They were Shamsuddin Hasan, MPS Veluyadhan, Sampuranand, Satyabhakta and Dr. Manilal. Four persons could never be brought to trial. M. N. Roy (who was in Germany), Ramchandralal Shukla (had escaped to Pondicherry), Ghulam Hussein had turned informer (he had confessed of receiving money from Kabul) and M. Singaravelu (arrested on March 6, 1924 and released on bail on March 7).  

The magisterial enquiry was insinuated against the remaining four- Nalini Gupta, Shaukat Usmani, S. A. Dange and Muzaffar

---

Ahmad. The enquiry had started on March 18, 1924 and ended on April 1. The District Magistrate was William Christie.

The Kanpur Conspiracy Case generated much enthusiasm among the people. It was more popular than the earlier Peshawar Conspiracy case. Satyabhakta who was in Kanpur, started a vigorous campaign in the Hindi press for the release of the prisoners. The Hindi daily Pratap glorified the case and Satyabhakta started making arrangements for organizing a Communist Conference in the city as the time was ripe for the same. Satyabhakta had became disgruntled with Gandhian techniques after the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement.\textsuperscript{88}

Satyabhakta had in fact started sending invitations to all Communist groups in the country to attend the conference. He began correspondence with Shapoorji Saklatavala, a British communist MP and despite the government’s repression, by July 1925, Satyabhakta claimed to have enrolled 250 members from every province in the country. In September 1925 he announced of an Indian Communist Conference to be held in Kanpur in December alongside the forthcoming Congress session.\textsuperscript{89}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 58
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 59.
\end{flushright}
The formation of the Communist Party was duly reported in *Bande Mataram*, an English daily of Calcutta and *Pratap*. Satyabhakta issued two leaflets (in Hindi and English) in which he declared the object of the party was the establishment of complete *Swaraj* and a system of society based on common ownership and communal control of the means of production and distribution of wealth. These leaflets were immediately banned by the United Provinces government and police raided the Kanpur office of the party in July and seized a number of books on communism from the socialist bookshop run by Satyabhakta.90

Satyabhakta had written a pamphlet entitled *‘An Appeal to the Lovers of Communism’* and thousands of its copies were circulated and distributed by one Balkrishna Mehta in Calcutta. This gentleman also made published more copies of Satyabhakta’s earlier pamphlet—*‘What is Bolshevism?’* and gave them to the same so that more distribution of it could be done in the city.91

After formally announcing the formation of the party, Satyabhakta inculcated its provisional constitution which proclaimed that the object of this party, named the CPI, was the establishment of complete *Swaraj* and transformation of Indian society on the basis of

---

90 Ibid., p. 58.
91 *Kanpur Ka Itihaas*, op.cit., p. 47
common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution of wealth in the interests of the whole community of India. But Satyabhakta made it clear that it was essentially a nationalist party with nothing to do with the Communist International. This declaration notwithstanding, the Government grew suspicious of Satyabhakta’s activities and thrice raided the office of his party in the city.92

As the Indian National Congress decided to convene its 40th session in Kanpur (in December 1925). Satyabhakta too wanted his conference to be conducted alongside the same and in the same compound. He needed funds and it was always Maulana Hasrat Mohani who provided or made arrangement for the same and for which Satyabhakta always remained grateful to Maulana. But this time the need was big. The Conference was to be started on 28 December when the Congress session was to be over (from Dec 26-Dec 28) but the delegates started arriving on the day when the Congress session started. Maulana Hasrat Mohani was appointed the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Singravelu Chettiar was to preside over the conference.93

93 Kanpur Ka Itihaas, op.cit., p. 48.
Coming to the nationalist agitation the suspension of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movement did brought a lull to the movement but it was not to live long. C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru had formed the Swaraj Party and its formation was blessed by Gandhi. In the year 1924 four prominent Congress leaders of the city- Narayan Prasad Arora, Krishna Dutt Paliwal, Gangadhar Ganesh Jog and Pt. Mannilal Awasthi formed a branch of the Swaraj party in Kanpur. The party took part in the election held to the Municipal Board. Although it was in a minority yet Murari Lal Rohatgi was elected its chairman. Narayan Prasad Arora who was already elected as President of the city Congress Committee in the year 1922 was also elected to the United Provinces legislative Assembly in 1924. His main opponent was Anand Swaroop who had earlier served as a member of the assembly but could not withstand the tide generated by the followers of Narayan Prasad Arora. A significant feature of this election was the participation of the youth in the campaign of Arora and it reflects the city’s mood and the sentiments of nationalism and freedom to which the youth was so attached.⁹⁴

Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism

Notwithstanding all the nationalist activity going on in the city Kanpur was to also bask in providing a stimulus to revolutionary or militant nationalism. There was a strong group of young men who became disgruntled with the Gandhian techniques and were craving for something different. As Eric Hobsbawm has said, “These men and women, whom I will refer to as revolutionaries, found that reformist strategies did not work and believed that violent action was necessary to move their rulers. They had a sense of urgency, a need to act immediately to change the world, a world controlled ultimately by foreigners and their servants.”

Due to the efforts of Sachindranath Sanyal, the Hindustan Republican Association was established in the United Provinces. The idea of making this organization and its first actual meeting took place in Kanpur. The meeting of the provincial committee of the organization took place in the house of Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya a diehard freedom activist and an ideologue. The meeting in his house was attended by Sachindranath Sanyal, Yogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Ram Prasad Bismil and Rajendra Lahiri. A pamphlet entitled ‘Revolutionary’ was also published. Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya’s home had became the meeting place of the

---

revolutionaries. He had worked in prominent dailies associated with the city like *Pratap* and *Vartaman*. Eminent nationalist Batukeshwar Dutt had taken his first lessons in militant nationalism in Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya’s home only. Gaya Prasad was also an illustrious figure of the city in independence struggle. He was operating through various names like Ram Nath, Ram Lal and S.B. Nigam. In February 1921 he came to Agra and took a house on rent where manufacturing of bombs by the revolutionaries used to take place.  

Yogesh Chatterjee had made Kanpur his home and had started living in the city since 1923. Ram Dulare Trivedi, a native of the city also landed himself to the cause of the revolutionary organization. As the Arya Samaj had been very strong in the city and from the beginning had a militant tone, the temples associated with the sect became favourite hideouts for the revolutionary terrorists. Ram Prasad Bismil who had visited Kanpur during 1923-24 had stayed at one of these temples only. It was here only that he met Ram Dulare Trivedi for the first time.

Batukeshwar Dutt too hailed from Kanpur. By 1925 he and Ajay Ghosh had joined the ranks of militant nationalists. The year 1925 saw Kanpur becoming a hot bed of militant nationalism with the

---

arrival of Manmnath Gupta, Jayachandra Vidhyalankar and Chandra Shekhar Azad. Another prominent family of the city which is remembered for its active participation in city’s freedom struggle was of Markandey Das Babu. His two sons Rajkumar Sinha and Bijoy Kumar Sinha played prominent roles in city’s revolutionary movement.

Kanpur became more famous in the annals of revolutionary terrorism in India because of Bhagat Singh’s brief sojourn with the city. He joined Pratap and came into contact with Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi. He was made the assistant editor. He was known in Kanpur by the name of Balwant Singh and used to write under this name only. His father somehow came to knew about his whereabouts and asked one of his friends to convey to Bhagat Singh the message that his mother is seriously ill. Hearing this news Bhagat Singh left for Punjab and his brief sojourn with Kanpur came to an end. But it had a lasting influence on Bhagat Singh as his revolutionary ideals were greatly sharpened and he cultivated an abiding relationship with prominent militant nationalists who had made Kanpur the hub of their activities.97

---

97 Kanpur Ka Itihaas, pp. 55-62.
All India Khilafat Conference

Two days before the Congress session was going to be held in the city, the All India Khilafat Conference also opened its proceedings (on 24 December) under the presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Sarojini Naidu, S. Srinivasa Iyengar and T. Prakasam were other prominent personalities present at the conference. Maulana Hasrat Mohani was chairman of the Reception Committee.98

Maulana Hasrat Mohani said that Turks had no power to end the Khilafat which must exist as long as Islam exists.99 It was only the responsibility for the office that the Turks had refused to assume he said. But Maulana also acknowledged that it was impossible to protect the Khilafat without the aid of Turkey and the gravest danger to Khilafat was rendered when the British and the French established their protectorate over Palestine and Syria respectively.100 He

---

99 Subhash Chandra Bose says that there was no mistake in connecting the Khilafat issue with the other national issues but in allowing the Khilafat Committee to be set up as an independent organization throughout the country, quite apart from the Congress. The result of this was when in 1923 Kemal Mustafa Pasha ‘Atartuk’ forced the Sultan to abdicate and abolished the office of Khalifa, the Khilafat question lost all meaning and significance, Subhash Chandra Bose, op.cit., p. 62.
100 *Indian Annual Register*, 1925, op.cit., p. 342.
appreciated the role of Sharif Hussain\textsuperscript{101} in refusing to sign an agreement with Britain regarding the Jewish home in Palestine. He also said that the Central Khilafat Committee should cease to support Ibn Saud and should demand for the establishment of a republic in Hejaz. He went even further to say that efforts should be made to rid Syria, Palestine and Iraq of foreign control and establish direct contact between Turkey and Hejaz.\textsuperscript{102}

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his Presidential Address stressed the need for strengthening the Khilafat organization. He also said that the various state Khilafat Committees should ally themselves with the Congress for the furtherance of the national programme.\textsuperscript{103}

On the concluding day of the Conference (27 December) an important decision was taken by the Khilafat Committee to expunge from the official Khilafat documents the address which Maulana Hasrat Mohani delivered as the Chairman of the Reception Committee.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{101} Sayyid Hussain Bin Ali (1854-1931), also known as Sharif Hussain was Sharif and Emir of Mecca from 1908 until 1917, when he proclaimed himself king of Hejaz, which got international recognition. He was the man who instigated the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Turks in the year 1916. He later proclaimed himself as the Khalifa in 1924 and briefly ruled over Hejaz until he was defeated by the forces of Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia and later abdicated.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Indian Annual Register}, op.cit., pp. 342-343.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 343.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 345.
The Congress Session, 1925

The Congress on the other hand went on its own programme. The 40th session of the Congress was held on the afternoon of the 26 of December in a spacious pandal. No extensive decorations were done but khaddar was greatly used. Portraits of leaders like Gandhi, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Madan Mohan Malaviya decorated the dais. Popular slogans of leaders like- “Swaraj is my Birthright” (Tilak), “End or Mend” (Deshbandhu), “Deeds not Words” (Lala Lajpat Rai) were boldly inscribed. The main motto in front of the dais declared “Unity is Strength”. Delegates and visitors began to pour in from 12 noon. Lady delegates and visitors were quite numerous. 105

The Kanpur District Board had already presented a memento to Mahatma Gandhi on 25 December. It had both Hindi and Urdu inscribed on it. Gandhi accepted it with utmost humbleness and regretted that he was not able to receive it earlier when it was offered to him as he was not keeping well. 106

By 2:30 the leaders started arriving amidst the playing of band. Motilal Nehru entered first with Lala Lajpat Rai on his right. Murarilal Rohatgi came next with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. As

105 Ibid., p. 313.
Gandhi arrived there was a loud cry of “Gandhi ki Jai” and he was followed by Maulana Mohammad Ali, Sarojini Naidu, M.R. Jayakar, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, J.N. Sengupta, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Vithalbhai J Patel, Vallabhbhai Patel, Shiv Prasad Gupta, Rajendra Prasad, M.A. Ansari, Purshottam Das Tandon, Rafi Ahmad Qidwai, Swami Shraddhanand and N.C. Kelkar.\textsuperscript{107}

Proceedings began at 2:45 p.m. National songs were sung and Murari Lal Rohatgi who was also Chairman of the Reception Committee delivered his address. He brought to attention the difficulties placed in their way by the authorities and also declared that non cooperation had emerged stronger and it was not dead.\textsuperscript{108}

The Kanpur Session was memorable in many respects. Attended by 15000 people, Gandhi handed the charge to Sarojini Naidu, who became the first Indian lady to became the President of India’s premier organization against the foreign rule. Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi was appointed as head of the Reception Committee. He had made elaborate preparations for the event to become a memorable one. Vidhyarthi appointed Shiv Narayan Tandon as captain of the Bal Sena or children’s army.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} *Indian Annual Register*, op.cit., p. 313.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 314.
The session being a spectacular affair. Local newspapers glorified it and it was rightly pointed out that the session had more sheen and sparkle than the earlier Congress sessions held at Ahmedabad, Gaya, Kakinada and Belgaum. While about 15,000 people had assembled in the pandal, almost two lakh twenty five thousand had gathered at the Tilak Nagar and its vicinity where the session was being held. Roads were flushed with people and there was great excitement all around. Food was offered to the delegates in platters of brass and copper.\textsuperscript{110}

Gandhi spoke but for five minutes and declared that on reviewing his five years’ work he had not one item to retrace or one statement to take back. The more he saw life, he said, the more he was convinced that he was right in every step he had taken—“Today I would commence Civil Disobedience”, he added, “If I thought that the fire and fervor are there in the people. But alas! they are not.”\textsuperscript{111}

As it was an open session a swadeshi exhibition was also organized which was opened by Gandhi on 24 December. Many took the signature of Gandhi as Congress organization needed money and Gandhi asked the people to adopt khadi. Gandhi had prophesized in the issue of Young India of 24 December 1924 that the upcoming

\textsuperscript{110} Vartman, 6.1.1926.

Kanpur Congress session will be a historical one and indeed it became one.

A significant feature of the Kanpur session was that for the first time a delegation of overseas Indians of South Africa, led by Abdullah Abdul Rahman participated in the session and asked the Congress leadership to press the government to withdraw Expulsion Area Reservation and Immigration Reservation Bills which had put the future of a lakh Indians of South Africa in a jeopardy. The Congress condemned them and declared it to be a breach of the Gandhi-Smuts agreement of 1914.\footnote{Ibid., An Indian mass meeting in Durban in 1914 had unanimously endorsed the agreement between General J.C. Smuts and M.K. Gandhi regarding voluntary registration, poll tax, recognition of Indian marriages and other matters. The preliminary agreement between Smuts and Gandhi had been reached in Pretoria earlier in January. The official ratification took place on 30 June 1914 through the exchange of letters between Smuts and Gandhi. Following the Gandhi-Smuts deliberations the Union Parliament passed the Indian Relief Act on 26 June 1914, abolishing the pound 3 poll tax, recognizing marriages contracted in terms of traditional Indian rites and facilitating the entry into the union of the wives of Indians already domiciled locally.}

One pleasant feature of the Kanpur Congress was the presence of the Rev. J. H. Holmes of America dressed in American clothes, but wearing a Gandhi cap. He rose in the midst of cheers and said:

“Yesterday I heard Dr. Abdur Rahman claiming Gandhiji as a South African. May I not claim him today for the whole world? May I not say that the Society of Friends which I represent regard him
with the same reverence and believe in his work as you do? I ought to say that we have gone very far wrong in our Western civilization. We have gone too far in the pursuit of wealth and power. It is a deep evil in our whole western civilization. So we gladly turn to you, who are indicating another and better way, and we hope that while keeping the good things in nature and inventions, we should follow the brotherly spirit which is represented by the great prophet (Gandhi) among you.”

The party also asked for military training as an essential part of national education. Questions were also discussed for training of the workers in nautical, naval and aerial training to equip the nation. It also asked for establishing an Overseas Department of Congress which will look after the conditions of Indians abroad. And perhaps the most glazing and novel thing adopted was that Hindustani was prescribed as the language in which all the future proceedings of the Congress were to be held.

Ever since the suspension of the Non-Cooperation movement, Congress was asked by Gandhi to take up the constructive programme and local stalwarts of the city busied themselves in it, of popularizing charkha (spinning wheel) and indigenous cloth- khadi. It

---

113 Ibid., p. 503. For details of the Kanpur Congress Session proceedings see Vartman dated January 2, 1926.
was at this time only an another major figure appeared on the city’s landscape the poet nationalist Shyamlal Gupta ‘Parshad’ now well known in the Hindi heartland for his famous *Jhanda Geet* (Flag Song) he had written in March 1924. The song was first sung on 13 April, 1924 on the fifth anniversary of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in city’s Phoolbagh area in full public galore in the presence of Jawahar Lal Nehru. It was to later became a part of every Congress programme in the city.\(^{114}\) Shyamlal Gupta had participated in the Bardoli satyagraha of 1921 along with Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi and also had went to jail for the same. In 1924, Vidhyarthi had defended him in a case of sedition. He was sentenced to six month imprisonment and fined rupees 400.\(^{115}\)

The heightened political activities and the constructive programme taken vigorously after the suspension of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements in 1922 plus that the two movements had been exemplary in the manner in which they were carried out, heralded the growth of a strong and widespread Congress organization in U.P. This was the pointer towards Congress’ rising popularity and the proof of its sound base and organizational structure it was to acquire later. Kanpur had given more than its due in this nationalist struggle.

\(^{114}\) Arvind Arora, op.cit., p. 146.