CONCLUSION

The independence movement acquired great pace in Kanpur. Ever since the post mutiny days, Kanpur had started harboring a nationalist feeling enlivened by the efforts of people like Pandit Prithvinath Chak who helped establish a branch of Indian National Congress in the city in the year 1888 and who was also involved in a lot of philanthropic activities. National consciousness by this time had started gaining strong roots and people were getting acquainted about their political and economic problems through the platform of the Congress which during this time was dominated by Moderates. Surendranath Banerjee, perhaps the most articulate moderate leader of the time had visited Kanpur in 1884 and delivered a speech at station theatre which is considered to be first visit to the city by a nationalist of an all India stature. It had a lasting impact on the people.

Kanpur being located in the heart of north India and the nationalist movement had taken strong roots in the region it was obvious that the city would too respond positively and the coming decades were to be an ample proof for the same. The outbreak of the Swadeshi movement in 1905 had electrified the political atmosphere in the country and for the first time the city witnessed large scale boycotting of foreign goods and Surya Prasad Mishra was
the man behind making it a success. He was given crucial support by Nalin Kumar Mukherjee and Narayan Prasad Arora, then only 24 years old.

From 1905 onwards political activities in Kanpur started gaining momentum. Gopal Krishna Gokhale’s visit was a great success and when Bal Gangadhar Tilak arrived here from Lucknow (after attending the Congress session) in 1916 he asked the people to start getting ready for an upcoming struggle which will test to the fullest their commitment, devotion and love for their motherland. The activities of Arya Samaj which had established itself during the last years of the 19th century also provided an impetus to the independence movement and some of Congress’ tallest leaders of the city like Rohatgi brothers (Murari Lal and Jawaharlal) were devout Arya Samajists. It is also equally true that an anti-Muslim tinge was always visible in the activities of Arya Samaj and so communal clashes were also a frequent outcome.

As Congress started gaining millions of followers throughout the country after the arrival of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on the scene and he gave the organization a distinct political and economic problem, the contours of the ongoing freedom movement started getting wider and sharper. Gandhi’s increasing stress on promotion of indigenous cloth (khadi) and swadeshi plus his observances on certain
ethical and moral principles made Congress a disciplined organization. The propagation of *khadi* acquired considerable success in Kanpur and it was at that time north India’s largest textile manufacturing centre.

Muslims had a very strong presence in the city as it had a large number of tanneries where almost ninety percent working class was Muslim it was inevitable that their participation in overwhelming numbers in the Khilafat and Non Cooperation movement added vigor and energy to the struggle and this movement was the first major national struggle to have been launched under the aegis of Gandhi. Most of the top leadership of the Congress had given its support to Gandhi’s programme and after that there was no looking back. Although the movement was a failure so far as the achievement of concrete goals was concerned. Swaraj was not achieved; Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were not redressed. But the campaign had woken the spirit of the people. Congress had proved itself to be a country-wide fighting machine. By this time Congress leaders of the city like Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Narayan Prasad Arora, Jawaharlal Rohatgi and Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi had acquired considerable popularity and due to their efforts Congress organization started getting stronger.

Growth of revolutionary ideas present us another side of the spectrum as the city had been visited by Lala Hardayal in the year
1908 and when Ghadar party was established in the United States (in 1911) its pamphlet Ghadar (Revolution) while getting distributed also started coming to Narayan Prasad Arora in a clandestine manner. These times also saw the visit of revolutionaries like Kartar Singh Sarabha and Ganesh Vasudev Pingle to Kanpur. Later due to the activities of Chandrashekhar Azad and Ram Dulare Trivedi the revolutionary movement reached its apex and continued until 1942.

Students were to shine in this period as they provided direction and a feeling of bravado to the movement. The contribution of the students of DAV College, Christ Church, BNSD College, Marwari College and Agriculture College was very significant. Government repression had succeeded only in making prison and punishment more honourable. There was a greater realization by the people of their rights and more consciousness that they must rely on their own efforts to win them.

Novel experiments undertaken by the Mahatma like taking long march to Dandi to break the salt law reflected his unique method of arousing people and they also helped in diverting attention (though for time being only) from problems of communal violence etc. and it was fervently carried by his disciples and in Kanpur people like Vidhyarthi and N.P. Arora were staunch Gandhians.
Nationalist newspapers like *Pratap* and *Vartman* were regularly covering the events taking place nationally and internationally and were making the people of the city more swaraj conscious. They often bore the brunt of the government for publishing what the government considered to be ‘seditious.’

The mobilization process, once begun, tended to generate its own momentum. Procession and demonstrations acquired considerable pace in the city. The refusal to follow government orders regarding processions was yet another symbolic act of protest against alien rule. It provided the ongoing freedom struggle in the city a flexibility and the time it acquired to gain maximum public support. With the passage of time confrontation with the colonial government accelerated its pace and it is witnessed in the character and nature of the movements launched i.e. Non Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India.

As Gyanendra Pandey has said that, “No national movement can expect to gain the active support of the whole body of the ‘nation’ over the entire geographical area of its claimed territory; or to be wholly free from inner tensions and divisions.”¹ We witnessed the same in Kanpur where frequent occurrence of communal riots was a serious hindrance to the cherished goals which Congress symbolized. But once things

---

¹ Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, Delhi, 1988, p. 4.
settled down there was a fresh overture from people to come forward as being united. The militant nationalists or revolutionaries though had differences with the Congress yet they were also of the opinion that it was the frontline and most organized machinery to fight for swaraj against foreign rule. In Kanpur these two streams ran parallel to each other and leaders like N.P. Arora, Hasrat Mohani and G.S. Vidhyarthi had on occasions displayed a revolutionary tinge.

United Provinces (modern Uttar Pradesh) had always remained in the forefront of the freedom movement and had provided a galaxy of Congress leaders of national stature. Kanpur being situated in the province and very near to politically active cities like Allahabad and Lucknow it was obvious that it was to sparkle in this momentous period (1919-47) of Indian National Movement.