CHAPTER - IV
CHAPTER IV

THE 'ZALIANWALA BAG' EPISODE A TURNING POINT - THE
CHANGING ATTITUDE OF THE THINKERS TOWARDS THE BRITISH
ADMINISTRATION

4.1 The view of C. F. Andrews

C. F. Andrews, who was always a close friend of
Rabindranath and Gandhi wrote: "No one can understand
Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards Great Britain and British
Empire unless he has come to realize that "Amritsar" was
a critical event which changed Mahatma Gandhi from a
wholehearted supporter into a pronounced opponent".1 If
the statement is true of Gandhi, it is also true of
Rabindranath whose gesture of renunciation of 'knighthood'
as a protest against the 'Zalianwala Bag' wrong had been
projected also by Andrews as "his (Rabindranath's) own
personal act of non-cooperation with a government which
he was convinced had committed unpardonable wrongs".2

In short, the 'Amritsar' wrong may be regarded as
a turning point in the thinkers' attitude towards the
British administration. In order to support this view,
one has to analyse carefully the thinkers' views regarding

*The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
the Indo-British relationship in general, before the 'Zaliaamwala Bag' episode and after.

4.2 The thinkers’ views regarding the good effects of British rule in India

Since both Rabindranath and Gandhi believed that "spiritual liberation" was the basic principle of political freedom and one meant the other, they never failed to appreciate the far-reaching results of British rule in India to that effect.

In welcoming the great spirit of Indian Renaissance, Rabindranath pointed out that the contact with the West, specially with the British, produced a kind of energy and a heat of enthusiasm in the minds of Indian people which lay dormant and inactive for some time. Her connection with the British helped her people to renew their faith in their religion, in their philosophy and culture and re-discover their country in a new spirit of hope and aspiration. India should fulfill the purpose of her connection with the English. In several writings and essays of the time Rabindranath accepted cheerfully the meeting of the East and the West, and found therein new hope and possibilities of much good. The ideal of freedom, liberalism, humanism of Western thought had great appeal to Rabindranath's mind. In his many essays and articles
on Indo-British relationship i.e. in the articles like the 'East and the West', 'The Great and the Small', 'The Rulers and the Ruled' and in similar essays. Rabindranath pays a generous tributes to the greater minds of Europe and England in particular.

The contact with the West awakened Japan. In his "Japan Jatri" (জাপান জাত্রি), Rabindranath appreciated warmly the awakening of Japanese people under the Western influence. Rabindranath explained that Japan had changed but managed to retain the spiritual tradition of the Eastern world. Rabindranath fondly hoped that the history of India, Japan and other countries of the Eastern world would merge in the history of the world, that their cultural progress would move forward and the British would help them in their forward march.

The poet writes in an invigorating tone about coming in contact with Western culture. He stood for a grand synthesis of Eastern and Western minds, in education, culture and knowledge and with this hope in mind, he founded his "Visva-Bharati" Institute whose motto was to unite the world in one nest. Tagore did not believe that there were different knowledges and different truths for different peoples. He believed as he wrote, "... on each race is laid the duty to keep alight its own lamp
of mind as its part in the illumination of the world. To break the lamp of any people is deprive it of its rightful place in the world festival.

It was the mission of Rabindranath's repeated foreign tours which attracted a stream of admirers and talented men of Europe to his 'Santiniketan' or the 'Abode for Peace'. Among his friends, the name of C. F. Andrews, W. W. Pearson, Roman Rolland, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, Earnest Rhys, Eftinstein and others deserve special mention. It was at the initiative of the painter Rothenstein Rabindranath's famous 'Gitanzali' became known to the West and won him the most coveted Noble Prize in 1913.

In short, Rabindranath looked upon education and knowledge as the best and highest means for international understanding and friendship. He therefore argued that India's educational centres must provide the best opportunity to know and appreciate the best cultures of the East and the West. Rabindranath insisted that any attempt, "to alienate our heart and mind from those of the West is an attempt at spiritual suicide"⁵. India should pay the highest tributes to the greater mind of Europe: "Let us be rid of all false pride and rejoice at any lamp lit at any corner of the world, knowing that it is a part of the common illumination of our house."⁶. These words of Rabindranath find their true reflections in Gandhi's
sayings - "If one man gains spiritually the whole world gains with him, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent."7

Like Rabindranath, Gandhi believed that the British rule in India, by and large, would contribute to the growth of India's mind from within. As C. F. Andrews pointed out in his study on Gandhi8, that he had great admiration for the liberal tradition of English people, specially for their constitution. Gandhi himself wrote in his Autobiography that he took part actively in the 'Boer War' (1899-1900), for the British, as, "I held that India could achieve her complete emancipation only within and through the British Empire"9. He emphasised the fact in clear words that his "loyalty to the British rule" drove him to active participation with the British in that war10.

C. F. Andrews who happened to know Gandhi even in South-Africa, pointed out that while in South-Africa, Gandhi never for a moment lost heart or despaired of justice in the end. He had constant struggles with General Smuts. Gandhi went willingly and even joyfully to prison. "But he never attacked the British constitution, because he believed at that time that it was founded upon justice"11. C. F. Andrews has rightly pointed out that Gandhi had lived with Englishmen, both in England and South Africa, for nearly thirty years of his life. He had
respected them, they had respected him. Even in India, Gandhi had many English friends and mutual regard had become an intimate part of his own life. According to C. F. Andrews, thus Gandhi became an "altogether friendly and sympathetic judge of English character, and in his own estimates of individual Englishman he is rarely mistaken". Gandhi, as pointed out by C. F. Andrews, mentioned many times, "in a very homely manner" the remarkable aspect of an Englishman's character i.e. his general reverential attitude of mind towards "moral conscience". As recorded by C. F. Andrews, Gandhi once said to him, "An Englishman never respects you till you stand up to him. Then he begins to love you. He is afraid of nothing physical but he is very afraid of his own conscience". C. F. Andrews even went further in pointing out the fact that Gandhi on many different occasions declared himself in 'public' as 'a lover of the British Empire'. On the eve of First World War, when Gandhi was requested to propose the toast of the "The British Empire" at a public dinner in Madras, Gandhi, in the words of Andrews, "gladly did so". Even in his speech on the occasion, Gandhi mentioned specifically, that there were "certain ideals" of the 'British Empire', he had "fallen in love" with.

In short, the great liberal tradition of the people of England and the spirit of 'justice, freedom and liberty'
of the English constitution had great appeal to the intellectual mind of Gandhi. In support of these ideals, Gandhi not only took part on the side of the British in the Boer War (1899-1900) but also during the war, he offered his humanitarian service in the cause of the British Empire as officer-in-charge of the Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Gandhi himself wrote in his Autobiography that with this ideal, he took part in the First World War. At that time he did not believe that “We (Indians) had been quite reduced to slavery”. He felt that it was more the fault of individual British officials than of the British system, and that he could convert them by love. Gandhi wrote, “If we would improve our status through the help and co-operation of the British, it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need”. Though the British system was faulty, it did not seem to him to be intolerable, as it did in the later days. In his many writings and speeches Gandhi confessed that by enlisting men for ambulance work in South Africa and in England, he helped not only the cause of war but I helped the institution called the British Empire in whose ultimate beneficial character I then believed. Gandhi wrote, on different occasions letters to the Englishmen, residing in India, explaining to them the reasons which turned him from an active co-operator and supporter of the British rule to a rebel. C. F. Andrews in his study on Gandhi
has quoted many portions of such type of letters, written by Gandhi to the Englishmen residing in India at that time. In one of these letters Gandhi wrote that no other Indian had co-operated with the British Government for an "unbroken period of twenty-nine years of public life in the face of circumstances that might well have turned any other man into a rebel". Gandhi confessed that the basis of his co-operation with the British was 'not the fear of punishments' but the 'belief that the sum total of the British Government was for the benefit of India'.

It should be noted that the British Government honoured Gandhi with the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal in recognition of his service to the cause of the Empire.

4.3 The impersonal rule of the British or the defects in British administrative system

Although Rabindranath and Gandhi maintained a conformistic attitude towards the British rule in India and believed that the contact with the West, specially with the British, had opened a new gate of self-criticism and self-improvement for the Indians, they did not fail to criticise some of the inherent defects in British administrative system which stood, as they believed, in the way of true union of minds between the people of England and of India.
The first reason which contributed to an increasing feeling of disharmony and distrust between them, as the thinkers pointed out, was the feeling of 'race-superiority' on the part of the English people in general over the Indians. Both Rabindranath and Gandhi had no faith in any theory of 'race inequality'. C. F. Andrews has pointed out that in South Africa and in India, often Gandhi declared: "If I did not believe whole-heartedly that racial equality was a man's birthright within the British Empire I should be a rebel."21

Rabindranath wrote that "in Indian history, the meeting of the Mussulman and the Hindu produced Akbar, the object of whose dream was the unification of hearts and ideals."22 But the fact still remains, the Western mind, after centuries of contact with the East, failed to understand the people of the East with sympathy and fellowfeeling. Rabindranath pointed out that it was the pride of a 'race' and 'nation' that prevented them from doing so. Moreover, their gross economic interest and greed for wealth and power made the Western powers to be more aggressive, adventurists and mechanical in their dealings with the people of the East. Rabindranath stated that the "wriggling tentacles of a coldblooded utilitarianism" with which the West had grasped all the easily yielding succulent portions of the East, were causing pain and
indignation throughout Eastern countries. "The West comes to us, not with the imagination and sympathy that unite and create but with a shock of passion - passion for power and wealth. This passion is a mere force, which has in it the principle of separation and conflict."  

The West had not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East but only its machine, said Rabindranath. He appealed to the people of England and in West to treat India 'on an equal footing' with a heart of sympathy and love for her people. Perfect harmony of relationship arises from perfect love and self-confidence. The British should develop a spirit of sympathy and love for the Indian people, while the latter should not indulge in a "begging mentality" or 'self-pity' in any case. The Indians should learn to depend more on their own force than on the English rulers.  

Like Gandhi, Rabindranath was more conscious of India's own imperfections than those of the ruling race. In his famous essay entitled 'Raja-Praja', Rabindranath wrote, "... the best way of checking the growing feeling of enmity between the ruler and the ruled is to devote our attention to the discharge of our immediate responsibility by keeping aloof from the English. We cannot achieve happiness of heart merely by begging". In the essay Rabindranath appealed to his countrymen to make themselves fit, worthy and self-confident
in approaching "the king with dignity and vigour". Or in other words, like Gandhi, Rabindranath insisted in his several writings, essays and speeches that Indians should develop a spirit of 'self-help' and 'self-confidence' in order to bring pressure on the British Rulers to treat the people of India on an equal footing and with honour.

In short, prior to the 'Zadamawala Bag' episode, both Rabindranath and Gandhi believed that the contact with the West specially with the British, had opened the new gate of change and reform from within in India, and she should utilize the opportunity in her best way to make herself worthy to approach her rulers as their equals. It was more a kind of 'self-criticism' than a criticism of foreign rulers. The underlying tone or spirit of this type of criticism was "self-help" and "self-confidence". The thinkers appealed to the foreign rulers to establish a heart-to-heart contact with the people whom they ruled and to try to understand their culture, tradition and way of living, with a heart of appreciation and enthusiasm. Rabindranath pointed out that the British people judged the Indians from their own point of view and added, "He takes the facts that displease him and readily makes use of them for his rigid conclusions, fixed upon the unchallengeable authority of his personal experience". Rabindranath wrote that the amazing lack of personal generosity towards
Indians on the part of British rulers made India, "a burden (for England) heavy with regret". The rulers wanted to rule Indian people through law and according to Rabindranath, British administration was, "a soulless machine only busy in enforcing law and order". Gandhi similarly commented, "Affection cannot be regulated or manufactured by law". Like Rabindranath, Gandhi believed that no union between the rulers and ruled was possible unless there was a real union of hearts between them. In fact, it was this feeling of love and trust towards the British people, which inspired Gandhi to take part on behalf of the British Empire in the First World War which "bewildered even his best friends" as pointed out by C. F. Andrews.

During the recruiting campaign for the First World War, Gandhi undertook unbearable hardships and strains and as a result, he became badly infected with dysentery and at one time he was on the point of death. In a letter addressed to one of his English friends Gandhi wrote: "I threw myself in an active recruiting campaign in Khaira District, involving long and trying marches, that I had an attack of dysentery which proved almost fatal. I did all this in the full belief that acts such as mine must gain for my country an equal status in the Empire".26

*The same feeling of love and fellowfeeling inspired Gandhi to take part on behalf of the British People in the Second World War also.

+The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
4.4 The 'Zalianwala Bag' - a turning point

In summing up, it may be said that although Gandhi and Rabindranath found fault with the administrative system of British Government and criticised the impersonal attitude of the British rulers, towards Indians, both Rabindranath and Gandhi believed that India should remain in the British Empire on the basis of racial equality.

But as was written by Gandhi in the above mentioned letter, that the, "Zalianwala Bag" wrong shattered his faith in the good intention of the Government and the nation which is supporting it.27

Gandhi launched his famous 'Non-Cooperation' movement against the British administration which to him had committed unpardonable atrocities on the innocent civilians in Punjab and flouted the sentiment of the Muslim community by betraying the 'Khilafat' cause.28

Addressing the Viceroy of India, Gandhi wrote a letter of protest in strong words and returned the 'Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal' awarded to him by the English authority in recognition of his service to the cause of British Empire. In the letter Gandhi mentioned that he could not wear the Medal as, "the Government has acted in the Khilafat matter in an unscrupulous, immoral and unjust manner" and "the punitive measures" taken by General Dyer,
Colonel Frank Johnson, Colonel O'Brien and other officers against the innocent people of Punjab in "wanton cruelty and inhumanity (became) almost unparalleled in modern times". Gandhi wrote, "Your Excellency's light-hearted treatment of the official crime . . . the shameful ignorance of the Punjab events and callous disregard of the feelings of Indians betrayed by the House of Lords have filled me with the gravest misgivings regarding the future of the Empire, have estranged me completely from the present Government, and have disabled me from tendering, as I have hitherto whole-heartedly tendered, my loyal co-operation".

In several letters addressed to the Englishmen then residing in India, Gandhi explained the character of the movement and the reasons why he was unable to co-operate with a system which he regarded as evil. C. F. Andrews has quoted these letters in his book entitled Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (pp.238-50).

It is interesting to note that Rabindranath Tagore, who is often described as a harbinger of the East-West cultural synthesis and union, also felt deeply grieved and humiliated by the inhuman cruelties and atrocities inflicted by the British administrators on the innocent civilians of Punjab. Addressing the Viceroy of India, Rabindranath wrote a strong letter of protest against the
'crime in Punjab' and renounced his "Knighthood" which was awarded to him by the British authority in recognition of his unique literary genius and talents. Some portions of the letter are worthy to be quoted in this context: It reads as follows:

"Your Excellency,

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized governments . . . the very least I can do for my country is take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen surprised into a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings".

The whole text of the original letters written by
Rabindranath and Gandhi have been included in the Appendix No. IV of the thesis. This act of moral protest on the part of poet Rabindranath, as it has already been said, was described by C. F. Andrews as the poet's own personal act of "non-cooperation" against a Government which had committed unpardonable crimes and wrongs. C. F. Andrews pointed out that such was the strong feeling of Rabindranath about "Amritsar" that even when he was too ill to be present at a meeting of protest at Bombay in the year 1920, he sent C. F. Andrews with a message to deliver in his name at the meeting. C. F. Andrews has quoted the message of Rabindranath in his book on Gandhi. The message of Rabindranath has also been reproduced in Appendix IV of the thesis.

4.5 No hatred against the British people

In short, the 'Zalianwala Bag' atrocities made Gandhi and Rabindranath non-cooperative to the very system of British administration in India. But it must be pointed out that the thinkers' non-cooperation was directed only to the system of British administration but not against the British people in general.

Both Rabindranath and Gandhi made a sharp distinction between the great Englishmen and the small Englishmen. In his famous article on 'Choto-O-Boro' (The Great and
the Small) Rabindranath classified as small Englishmen, those worldly-wise, routine-minded, mechanical and power-seeking British administrators who did not stop at saying, "I am here" but proudly added, "and here I shall remain". Like Rabindranath, Gandhi in his letter to the Englishmen in India during the non-cooperation movement, clearly pointed out that he had no illfeelings against the British people in general, but his non-cooperation was directed against the "system" of British administration in particular and against all those who were responsible for the untold miseries of the people of Punjab. In one of the letters Gandhi had clearly pointed out that "an Englishman in office is different from an Englishman outside... an Englishman in India is different from an Englishman in England". Gandhi added, "We need not hate Englishmen while we may hate the system that they have established".

In his many letters and interviews given during non-cooperation movement, as pointed out by C. F. Andrews, Gandhi repeatedly pointed out that it was contrary to his nature to distrust people, "Mine is not an exclusive love, I cannot love Mussalmans or Hindus and hate Englishmen". His non-cooperation, as Gandhi put it, "has its root not in hatred, but in love". Gandhi explained to his English friends in India, that it was possible to hate an 'evil' without hating an evil doer. In another letter addressed
to then Englishmen, Gandhi wrote, "I am trying to show them (English people) that one may detest the wickedness of a brother without hating him. Jesus denounced the wickedness of the scribes and Pharisees, but he did not hate them".

In short, the thinkers' non-cooperation was rooted not in the hatred against the common Englishmen but was against the "system" of British administration and law in particular that was responsible for the crimes in "Zaliaamwala Bag".

4.6 The reactions of the British rulers in India and abroad

It is interesting to note how the British propaganda machine reacted against the gesture of Rabindranath, when he renounced the 'Knighthood'. After the Zaliaamwala Bag episode, Rabindranath undertook foreign tour. When Rabindranath was in America, the British Propaganda machine insulted him with the suspicion that the poet was involved in the plot to overthrow the British rule through active sympathy with violent and terrorist activities. Tagore while on a lecturing tour in the United States, in an article contributed to the Atlantic Monthly, narrated his experience, "I was told by some of my best friends there (in America) that powerful propaganda seemed to be working against me in consequence
of the desperate protest which I had been compelled to
make against the Zaliamwala Bag atrocities in our own
country, shortly before I had left India. If that was the
case, it only supports the idea that your country (that is
America) lends herself too easily to all secret spells
of insinuation, allowing its crowd psychology to be
perpetually handled by clever manipulators".

While Rabindranath was insulted abroad with a
suspicion of his being involved in a conspiracy case against
the British rule, Gandhi was sent to jail in India, with
the charge of breaking the existing law and order, by
starting his famous non-cooperation movement against the
British rule.
REFERENCES - IV

2. Ibid., p.251.
6. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p.248.
13. Ibid., p.249.
15. Ibid., p.218.
19. Quoted in Ibid., pp.238-239.
20. Ibid.
During the first world war, in January 1918, Mr. Lyed George promised the devoted Muslim world not to injure the prestige of the Sultan of Turkey as Caliph, the religious head of the Muslims. After the war, the Britishers betrayed their promise by destroying much of the Caliph's temporal authority and thus threatening Islam at its very centre. At this the Muslim population of North India was deeply agitated and started the 'Khilafat Movement' in order to obtain better treatment of Turkey and to restore the power of the Caliph as head of the Muslim faith. Gandhi lent his whole-hearted support to this movement and upheld the cause in great sympathy to his Muslim brothers.

C. F. Andrews reproduced two letters, one interview and one public speech of Gandhi addressing to the Englishmen residing in India, explaining to them the reasons for his non-cooperation against the 'British administration' but not against the people of England in general.

APPENDIX - IV

On the good effects of British rule in India

Rabindranath:

"When I was young we were all full of admiration for Europe . . . we had come to know England through her glorious literature which had brought inspiration into our young lives. The English authors, whose books and poems we studied, were full of love for humanity, justice and freedom . . . we believed with all our simple faith that even if we rebelled against foreign rule, we should have sympathy of the West. We felt that England was on our side in wishing us to gain our freedom".*

Rabindranath Tagore, My Reminiscences.

Gandhi:

"My loyalty to the British rule drove me to participation with the British in that (Boer war) I held then that India could achieve her complete emancipation only within and through the British Empire*. So I collected together as many comrades as possible, and with very great difficulty get their services accepted as an

*The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
ambulance corps".


The letter written by Rabindranath to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford:

"Your Excellency,

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organisation for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through gaged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been
ignored by our rulers, possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons. The callousness has been praised by most of the Anglo-Indian papers which have in some cases gone to the brutal length of making fun of our sufferings without receiving the least check from the same authority, relentlessly careful in smothering every cry of pain and expression of judgement from the organs representing the sufferers. Knowing that our appeals have been in vain and the passion of vengeance is blinding the noble vision of statesmanship in our Government which could so easily afford to be magnanimous as befitting its physical strength and moral tradition, the very least I can do for my country, is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings.

And these are the reasons which have painfully compelled me to ask your Excellency, with due deference and regret, to relieve me of my title of knighthood which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the
I flinch from the hands of your predecessor, for whose nobleness of heart
I still entertain great admiration.

Yours faithfully,
Rabindranath Tagore

The letter written by Ghandi to the Viceroy of India.

"It is not without a pang that I return the
Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal granted to me by your predecessor
for my humanitarian work in South Africa for my services
as officer in charge of the Indian Volunteer Ambulance
Corps in 1906, and the Boer War Medal for my services as
assistant superintendent of the Volunteer Stretcher Bear
Corps during the Boer War of 1899-1900. I venture to
return these medals in pursuance of the Scheme of
Non-cooperation inaugurated today in connection with the
Khilaft movement. valuable as these honours have been
to me. I cannot wear them with an easy conscience so long
as my Mussalman countrymen have to labour under a wrong
done to their religious sentiment *

The attitude of the Imperial and your Excellency's
Governments on the Punjab question has given me additional
cause for grave dissatisfaction. I had the honour, as
your Excellency is aware, as one of the Congress
Commissioners to investigate the causes of the disorders
in the Punjab during April 1919. And it is my deliberate conviction that Sir Michael O'Dwyer was totally unfit to hold the office of Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, and that his policy was primarily responsible for infuriating the mob at Amritsar. ***** Your Excellency's light hearted treatment of the official crime, your exoneration of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Mr. Montague's dispatch, and, above all, the shameful ignorance of the Punjab events and callous disregard of the feelings of India's betrayed by the House of Lords, have filled me with the gravest misgivings regarding the future of the Empire, have estranged me completely from the present Government, and have disabled me from tendering, as I have hitherto wholeheartedly tendered, my loyal co-operation.

In my humble opinion the ordinary method of agitating by way of petitions, deputations, and the like is no remedy for moving to repentance a Government so hopelessly indifferent to the welfare of its charge as the Government of India has proved to be. In European countries condonation of such grievous wrongs as the Khilafat and the Punjab would have resulted in a bloody revolution by the people. They would have resisted at all cost national emasculation such as the said wrongs imply. But half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance, and the other half is unwilling to do so. I have,
therefore, ventured to suggest the remedy of Non-cooperation, which enables those who wish to do so to dissociate themselves from the Government, and which, if it is unattended by violence and undertaken in an ordinary manner, must compel it to retrace its steps and undo the wrongs committed. But whilst I shall pursue the policy of Non-cooperation in so far as I can carry the people with me, I shall not lose hope that you will yet see your way to do justice. I therefore respectfully ask your Excellency to summon a Conference of the recognized leaders of the people, and in consultation with them find a way that would placate the Mussalmans and do reparation to the unhappy Punjab".

Young India, (S. Ganesan) 1921-22, pp.219-220.

Rabindranath's note of protest sent through C. F. Andrews to Bombay meeting in 1920.

"A great crime has been done in the name of the law in the Punjab. Such terrible eruptions of evil leave their legacy of the wreckage of ideals behind them. What happened in Zalianwala Bag was itself a monstrous progeny of a monstrous war, which for four years had been defiling God's world with fire and poison, physical and moral. The immensity of the sin has bred callousness in the minds of those who have power in their hands, with me
check of sympathy within, or fear of resistance without. The cowardliness of the powerful, who owned no shame in using their machines of frightfulness upon the unarmed and unwarned villagers, and inflicting humiliations upon their fellowlings behind the screen of an indecent mockery of justice, has become only possible through the opportunity which the late war has given to man for constantly outraging his own higher nature, trampling truth and honour underfoot. The disruption of the basis of civilization will continue to produce a series of moral earthquakes, and men will have to be ready for still further sufferings. That the balance will take a long time to be restored is clearly seen by the vengefulness ominously tinging red the atmosphere of the peace deliberations.

But we have no place in these orgies of triumphant powers rending to pieces the world according to their own purposes. What most concern us is to know that moral degradation not only pursues those inflicting indignities upon the helpless, but also their victims. The dastardliness of cruel injustice confident of its impunity is ugly and mean; but the fear and impotent anger which they are apt to breed upon the minds of the weak are no less abject. Brothers, when physical force in its arrogant faith in itself tries to crush the spirit of man, then comes the time for him to assert that his soul is
indemnite. We shall refuse to own moral defeat by
cherishing in our hearts foul dreams of retaliation. The
time has come for the victims to be warriors in the field
of righteousness*.

When brother spills the blood of his brother and
exults in his sin, giving it a high sounding name; when he
tries to keep the blood stains fresh on the soil as a
memorial of his anger: then God in shame conceals it under
the green grass and the sweet purity of His flowers. Let
us take our lesson from His hand, even when the smart of
the pain and insult is still fresh - the lesson that all
meanness, cruelty, and untruth are for the obscurity of
oblivion, and only the Noble and True are for eternity".


*The underline has been given to emphasise the words.