Chapter - V

NATIONALIST INTELLIGENTSIA, FORMATION OF
PEASANTS' POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND
THE METHODS OF MASS MOBILIZATION,
1920-22
CHAPTER V


The aim of this Chapter is to seek answers to two crucial questions related to the peasants' relationship with national movement in Andhra during 1920-22. Firstly what was the nature of perception which prompted the masses, especially the peasantry, to see Gandhi as their 'messiah' and the Congress-led liberation struggle as their struggle? Inspite of Gandhi's open hostility towards integrating the local grievances into general programme, the peasantry after starting their independent no-revenue campaigns, social boycotts, etc., always pleaded for the extension of Congress protection to their campaigns. Many a time they also succeeded in persuading or forcing the local Congress leadership to take up their issues as part of the non-

1. See Chapter IV; and B. Seshagirirao, History of Freedom Movement in Guntur District 1921-47 (Ongole, not dated), PP.69-142.

2. For instance, in Palnad, Guntur district, the peasants "borrowed the weapon of non-cooperation" to secure the removal of their forest grievances, even though the Gandhian leadership was not willing to accept this experiment of civil disobedience. It was reported by the peasants to the local press that to avoid the forest restrictions, penalties and famines "we have organised a scheme of non-violent non-cooperation by which we have entered into an agreement ... (i.e.) not to render any help to any Forest Official and to boycott such as violate this, not to pay fees or fines, etc., we request patriotic Andhra leaders to encourage us; and save from the trouble at the hands of this Government" (Emphasis added). Reported in "Dashabhimani" (Guntur) dt. 2 July, 1921 in Report on Native News Papers - Madras, 1921, pp.1030 & 943 (hereafter as RNNPM); also see Fortnightly report, dt. Fort St. George, the 17th February 1921, No. 971-1, Public (confid), p.5; K.V. Ramana Reddy (ed.), Unnava Rachanalu Konni (some writings of Unnava Lakshminarayana, Telugu, Kavali, 1979) pp.136-149; Palnati Durantamulu (Enquiry Committee Report appointed by APCC, Telugu, Madras, 1923); B. Seshagirirao, op.cit., pp.96-117.
cooperation movement. Secondly, at what level did the Congress ultimately absorb the radical social protests of this period within its programme of 'non-violent non-cooperation'? And how did it resolve the contradictions that emerged within the Congress, especially in the light of peasants' pressure in the rural areas to take up their class demands as part of non-cooperation movement?

To answer these questions an analysis of the role of popular intelligentsia in the formation of peasants' national consciousness and their perception of Gandhi and his 'swarajya' would become necessary. The nature of propaganda and the methods of mass political mobilization also had a crucial bearing on this. For to mobilize the masses in support of Gandhi's particular form of political action with a firm control over the affairs, the Congress used interesting methods of mass mobilization - popular folk traditions, 'harikathas', stage plays, 'bhajan' marches etc. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how the forms of mobilization adopted by the Congress leaders helped them to retain Congress control over the course of the national movement without endangering its mass social base.

Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha (1917) was perhaps the first move which stirred hopes in the hearts of peasantry in Andhra. The nationalist intelligentsia of Andhra described Gandhi as the only leader who could lead the masses and establish 'swarajya'. Many 'messianic' elements were attached to his charismatic image. The peasantry also perceived Gandhi as a 'messiah' who could redress

3. Good examples are Palnad and Pedanandipad social boycott and no-tax campaigns which we have analysed in detail in chapter IV.
their grievances wrought by colonialism and uplift them from their poverty.

Let us start our analysis with some of the precepts in contemporary popular Telugu plays. In 1921 alone around eighteen dramas were written and staged to evoke sympathy for nationalism and Gandhi in the minds of the people. Among them four were on Gandhi and other nationalists; four on king Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagara empire; five on Shivaji and five on different mythological and historical personalities. In Telugu the first political drama was written by Damaraju Pundarikashudu of Guntur. He first wrote "Navayugarambham" or "Gandhi Mohodayam" in 1921, was followed by "Gandhi Vijayam" or "Navayugam", "Panchali Parabhavam" and "Swarajaya Radham". In all the dramas Gandhi was the hero and the contemporary politics were the main themes.

A three act play, "Navayugarambham" (which means 'starting of new era') was "aimed at", in the words of the author Pundarikashudu, "reaching the illiterate common people and developing political consciousness among them". In the first part of the first act two characters - English Rao and Aravinda Swami, carried on discussion on all 'avataras' (incarnations) of God. Aravinda Swami expounds the theory that including Christ and Mohammad there were twelve incarnations of God on this Earth, and that God has been ruling the world by forming all the twelve incarnations into a "legislative assembly". The conference of the God with


5. Ibid., pp.125-26. Important extracts of this play are reproduced in Ibid., pp.125-29.
all his incarnations; the death of Tilak, and his entry into God's "legislative assembly" in the heaven as one of the incarnations are shown in the second and third parts. After proving the necessity of eleven 'avatars' in the end of the third part, God says:

Now (I should) be born in 'Kaliyuga' as "Kalki" (and) take more incarnations on Earth.

Among them firstly I became Tilak, now (I) should become Gandhi to guard 'Dharma'.

And then he transforms into Gandhi. In this part, the incarnations of Rama, Krishna, Parasurama, etc., worried about the conditions in 'Bharata Desa', would request God to give freedom to the country. The God, of course, accedes to their request and takes up the incarnation of Gandhi in the end of the third part.

The most dominating part of the play was the second act, where the death of Lokman-ya Tilak and the merging of his 'spirit' or soul with the Gandhian form are shown. In the third act again, "God's assembly" and Tilak's entry into heaven are enacted prominently. After welcoming Tilak, the 'Deva Sabha' (God's assembly) decides to give their blessings to 'Gandhian avatar'. Therefore, Gandhi also comes to heaven and gets the blessings of 'Deva Sabha'. In the last part, the dawn of a new Gandhian era is shown. In the end Gandhi is shown nursing the fainted 'Bharata Mata' (After seeing the death of Tilak she faints). Here Gandhi touches her feet and narrates his story. Then 'Bharata Mata' declares the dawn of Gandhian era and overbody accepts Gandhi as their leader. Gandhi promises them "swarajya" in one year. The play ends with the blessings of 'Bharata Mata'. "Under the able leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who believes in non-
victorius. Best wishes for you. Soon you would get "Swarajya."

The second drama, "Gandhi Vijayam" (Victory of Gandhi), by Pundrikashudu was also mainly a political play. The main aim of the play was to communicate contemporary political history to the people in a simple language - starting from the emergence of Gandhi on the political scene till the end of Nagpur Congress.

In the first act of the play the history of the Congress and the national political condition prior to Calcutta Congress were staged. The first part starts with a dialogue between Arabind Ghosh and Gandhi, in which Arabind Ghosh advises the people, who come to see him, to follow Gandhi. Thereafter, the people leave the stage singing about the greatness of Gandhi. In this act there was an interesting scene about the problems and precepts of peasants. Two peasants, Ramaiah and Bagi Reddy, after discussing "the burden of taxes imposed by the alien rulers", express their feelings and ask: "when would we be liberated from this tyranny"? Disgusted with litigation and spending all their money in foreigners' courts they get ready to go to Gandhi and request him to remove their troubles. In the second act the writer explains the necessity of Hindu-Muslim unity through Shaukat Ali. However when Ali in his anger argues in favour of using violence to overthrow the English, Gandhi explains at great length the

6. All the details and examples given in the text are from Ibid.

7. All the examples given in the text are from Ibid., pp. 129-36.
necessity of non-violent philosophy and says:

Non-violent path is the sure way for victory.
If great people like you become angry won't there be a revolution.

Then the Calcutta Congress is enacted in detail incorporating many of its speeches, discussions, etc. In the third act the proposals of Gandhi, the ensured discussions, in the Congress, and the ultimate acceptance of his proposals are shown. Here Gandhi says:

'Satyagraha', the path of 'Prahlada' is the only main way suited for Hindu mentality.

No hope to get freedom by following the old path.

(Therefore) Resolve to non-cooperate for one year; then only 'Swarajya' with all miracles would come ...

In his last speech Gandhi advocates 'triple boycott', and prays to Tilak. Tilak then appears behind the curtain and advises the people "not to allow Gandhi to lose his courage or morale". Thereafter they all accept Gandhi's resolution in the Congress. The fourth act starts with the political divisions within the Congress and ends with the ultimate boycott of elections. The Nagpur conference and the final acceptance of Gandhian non-cooperation, even by Bipin Chandra Pal and Malaviya, were enacted in the fifth act. The drama ends with an explanation from Gandhi, where he elaborates the principles of non-cooperation, constructive programme and non-violent philosophy. He says:

You should not forget service to Motherland as first and foremost act even in dreams ....
I tell you again and again do not forget non-violence.

Another popular play of Pundarikashudu was "Panchala Parabhavam" of "The Punjab Outrages" or "the Insult offered to Panchala" in which Gandhi is shown as being sent by the "Lord of the Universe" to avenge the horrible massacres that were perpetrated in Punjab.
by General Dyer, and to restore the liberty and freedom taken away by the Rowlatt Bill. In the first act 'Mother India' exhorts:

Alas! O God. O! Protector of the humble,
O Lord of the Universe. Have you no mercy upon me?
Will you not come to protect my sons?

Immediately Gandhi enters the scene and 'Mother India', addressing Gandhi, says:

It is my wish that you should devise some means for the emancipation from servitude of the thirty-three crores of your brothers here.

Gandhi then expounds his philosophy of non-violent 'Satyagraha' and cites the examples of Prahlada and others. He further says:

I am applying the sacred Satyagraha vow to the present political conditions of the country. It is such a divine weapon as is calculated to put an end to the arbitrary rule of the Government and as befits our traditions....

In another scene perception of the unjust British rule was put forward through a 'coolie' character. Answering a question as to why the Government prohibited him from working, he says:

I do not know, Sir, I only know one thing. That our Government have been doing us injustice and that, while we are dying with famine, all their people drive in motor-cars over our heads. A new and strange thing has come....

Interestingly, in the second act the success of hartal is attributed to the "soul force" of Mahatma Gandhi and the confidence of the people in him. Then comes the fascinating Act IV, wherein a prison-house, when Dyer insults 'Mother Panchala'

9. G.O. No. 792, Ibid., p.3.
10. Ibid., p.4.
by seizing the fringe of her garment, she prays to Sri Krishna, who saved the modesty of Panchala Draupadi. 'Balakrishna' thereafter appears and says to her:

I have taken a vow to remove your hardships and to put down the pride of the wicked, arrogant, hard-hearted 'Kiratas'. I shall appear to people in the form of Gandhi in 'Kaliyuga'. You will have salvation by the method shown to you by Mahatma Gandhi, who is sweetly peaceful .... Be not grieved. Think of me whenever I am needed to preserve your modesty and deliver you from difficulties. Do not lament any longer. Your calamities will soon come to an end.

Krishna disappears and enters again in the form of Gandhi winding the spinning wheel and presenting her with a piece of cloth. Dyer, who was pulling her garment runs away. The drama concludes with a speech by Gandhi in which he says:

The movement of non-cooperation is the only support of our life and a resource based upon self-help. We must give up mendicancy. Be solely devoted to obtain 'swaraj', your birth right and behave peacefully. If you do so, Mother India will soon have the pleasures of freedom. There will be democracy mildly carrying on the administration. Arbitrary authority will meet with destruction and 'swaraj' will be attained.

Since the old mythology was reinterpreted to show the then colonial reality, it easily reached the hearts of the illiterate masses.

The projection of Gandhi into popular psychology as the saviour from above who came down to remove famines, avenge British misdeeds and establish "swarajya" which, of course, was associated with a "democracy mildly carrying on the administration", caught the imagination of the masses in the villages. The age old myths, popular cultural traditions, pantheon of Hindu Gods and many historical personalities became vehicles to carry these 'messianic' elements of the Gandhian

10. Ibid., p. 4.
11. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
12. Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, op. cit., 136
personality into the perception of the masses.

There were many more political plays written and staged during this period. "Swarajya Dhawajamdu" (Swarajya Flag) of Panditha Seetha Ram was so popular that it had to be printed twice in 1921. Other popular plays were "Ali Prabhatula Nirbandhamu" (The Karachi Trial of Ali Brothers) written by Jandhyala Ayyavari Sastri in 1921 and published by "Swarajya Grandhalayamu", Tenali, Guntur district; "Tilak Maharaja Naataka", written immediately after the death of Bala Gangaadhara Tilak, and "Gandhi Vijya Dhawaja Naataka" (Drama of Gandhiji's Victorious Flag) written in 1921 by Sri Pada Krishna Murthy Sastri of Rajahmundry.

13. In all the above dramas not surprisingly almost all important Hindu Gods and Kings of the past history, popular Muslim leaders and Congress personalities in one scene or the other come on the stage to strengthen the myth that Gandhi was the incarnation of the 'Lord of the Universe'.

14. For summary of this drama see, Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, op.cit., pp.136-38.

15. For summary of the dramas see, Ibid., pp.138-41; Andhra Patrika, 3 March 1921; 1st February 1922 and for the summary of Sri Pada's 'Tilak Maharaja Naataka' see, 6 April 1921.

15-A Proscribing this nine acts play, in which Gandhi has been presented to be an 'avatara' like Sankara, Ramakrishna and Buddha possessing manifold virtues it was remarked by the Madras Government that:

"It is no doubt a political drama, the object being the praise of the non-cooperation movement which is held out to the public for acceptance as a duty. Most of the statements and the arguments put forth in the book are no doubt copies from the political speeches of either the leaders of the extremist or moderate parties in the country. The book contains the usual denunciation of the imposition of every Municipal or Provincial or Imperial tax, the Rowlatt Act and the Punjab wrongs. The effect produced on the reader who reads the whole book would be that in the opinion of the author the present government of the country is the most wicked and unjust. So unjust, that a new incarnation of the deity (Vishnu) is needed to implant justice in the land". (Emphasis added). GOM., G.O.No.839, Pub.Dept., dt. 30th Oct. 1923, p.163.
Sripada Krishna Murthy Sastri's "Swarajya Radhamu" was staged in many places to propagate the Gandhian movement and collect funds for 'Swarajya Nidhi'. Another political play written by Sri Rama Raju Pundarikashudu, "Swarajya Soopanamu", was staged in different districts by different drama associations to spread the message of Gandhi and mobilize the peasantry in favour of the non-cooperation movement. For instance, on 14th January, 1921, it was staged in Bezwada by the team "Gandhi Naataka Samajamu". The "Guntur Tilok Naataka Samajamu" had staged this play even in the most backward (politically) parts, like Nandyala taluq, to spread the message of non-cooperation and also to collect funds for Guntur National School.

Among the mythological plays, "Padmavyuham" by Kallakuri Narayana Rao (1919) was a famous one. Here the popular mythological story was interpreted to bring out and justify the contemporary nationalistic sentiments and political movements. In the end of this play as a part of his "Gostopadesam" (advises given to Arjuna by Krishna in Mahabharat), Lord Krishna praises the contemporary national movement. Historical plays were by far the largest in number produced during 1921-22. There were eight plays on Rana Pratap, five on Shivaji and five on Andhra heroes. Here both Indian and Andhra historical episodes


17. Andhra Patrika, 20 January and 3 February 1921; "Andhra Mata" was another political drama which was written and staged in 1921. See, Ibid., 14 October 1921.

were interpreted and staged to strengthen national consciousness. The most popular play based on Andhra history was "Palnati Veeracharitra" (story of Palnad) apart from "Krishna Raya Vijayam" (Victory of Sri Krishna Deva Raya) and "Bobbili Yudham".

In almost all the plays, be it mythological or historical or political, there were scenes legitimizing the emergence of Gandhi as a worthy successor to the earlier nationalists like Tilak. In every play, therefore, Tilak’s soul enters into Gandhi or his spirit appears behind the curtain appealing to the people to follow his successor Gandhi without question. They projected the past nationalist political traditions and nationalist leaders as personified in Gandhi and thereby created a dominant and legitimate place for his leadership in the collective consciousness of the people. Thus the perception that Gandhi was the undisputed leader or "avatar", descended to give them 'Swarajya', filtered down into mass perception. How could the illiterate masses have been able to defy such a powerful and 'holy' image, which in turn personified the legacy of the preceding political struggles, even if Gandhi was against taking up the class grievances of peasantry as a part of anticolonial struggle?

In fact, plays were the most popular means of not only spreading the Congress ideology and methods of political struggle among the masses, but also were instrumental in mobilising the villagers in support of the Gandhian non-cooperation movement. Whenever the government intervened and banned the staging of these plays, the nationalist writers used to write and enact new plays in place of

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the old ones. Thus, as was the case with "Panchala Parabhavam", "Gandhi Vijayam" and "Swarajya Radham", plays were written one after another by Pundarikashudu and staged by "Tilak Naataka Samajam" (Tilak Drama Association started in 1921 at Guntur) in different centres. In the villages these plays thrilled the masses and mobilized them in favour of non-cooperation movement.

Of all the places in the coastal districts, Guntur had become the main centre for popular Telugu plays. Many theatre groups visiting different villages with their 'seditious' plays acted as 'political agents' for the Congress Party, both in the urban and rural areas. They became instrumental in articulating the nationalist politics mostly at the village level. Notable among them was "Tilak Naataka Smajam" of Guntur. In other words, the Telugu theatre was one of the institutions which had been serving Gandhian politics, acting as the "message bearers" for nationalist politics. The most popular play staged during the non-cooperation movement was D. Pundarikashudu's political drama, "The Punjab outrages or the Insult offered to Panchala", which described the political history commencing from the awakening of the satyagraha vow and concluding with the Amritsar session of

20. Madala Veerabhadra Rao, op.cit., p.69. To quote another example in spite of Government restrictions "Gandhi Vijayam" by Pundarikashudu was staged in every nook and corner of Andhra. This drama was said to have been staged several thousand times in Andhra. See, Madali Nagabhushana Sarma, op.cit., p. 136; also see Andhra Patrika, 1 February 1922.

So popular and 'seditious' was this play, that the Government by invoking the 'Dramatic performance Act' of 1876, proscribed the published text and banned its performances. Another popular play performed by the 'Tilak Naataka Samajam' of Guntur was "Swarajya Soupanam". This was staged in various places in Guntur and Krishna districts. It was reported by the Madras Government that "General Dyer is parodied and a fanciful representation given of the execution of the crawling order. This drama was a political one, designed to glorify the cause of non-cooperation, which was identified with that of 'swaraj' and to bring into contempt the existing administration. As the drama was likely to create disaffection and unrest, its performance was prohibited throughout the presidency under section 3(b) of the Dramatic Performance Act of 1876." "Swarajya Swapnam" (The Dream of self-rule), was another play which, in the words of one police inspector, "impressed very well on the audience and in my humble opinion even several non-cooperative meetings could not impress so well". (Emphasis added). In fact, there was a mushroom growth of these political plays which politicised the masses and mobilized them in favour of Gandhian movement. Sripada Krishnamurthi Sastri's "Gandhi Vijayadhwaja Naatakam" (Gandhi's Victorious Flag), Kodali Anjanyulu's "Viplava Parivartanam"; and "Tilak Maharaj Naatakam" and "Tilak Life" by


24. Quoted in S. Theodore Baskaran, op.cit., p.27.


27. See, S. Theodore Baskaran, op.cit., p.28.
Manikonda Satyanarayana Sastri of Rajahmundry were few examples among many. Apart from articulating the Gandhian politics at the village level, these plays also postured a particular version of Gandhi and his 'Swarajya'. The ultimate result was that the peasants perceived Gandhi as a 'Saviour' who had been redeeming the peasants' grievances elsewhere and would be likely to do so here, if they will follow his path faithfully. For instance, in "Gandhi Vijaya Naatakan" by Sripada, Gandhi's life was depicted in such a way that he emerged as a 'messiah' who would be able to remove any grievance associated with colonialism. All these plays created a very wide social base for national movement in Andhra. For ultimately the unconscious became conscious. The peasantry from the rural base had become the main social force behind nationalist movements in Andhra. In other words, the peasantry, the main social force, were mobilized psychologically by the drama propaganda. As a result either they came on their own into the movements/protests or were easily mobilized by the Congress volunteers whenever the necessity arose.

Throughout this period (1919 to 1922) apart from plays, many Telugu leaflets, bulletins, pamphlets and books were published to propagate the Gandhian charisma and influence the popular mind.

28. Andhra Patrika, 19 February 1921; For a brief text see, 2 March 1921.
29. For more information see GOM., Pub. Dept., G.O. No. 499 (Mis), 14th June 1922; No.83 (Mis), 28 January 1922; No.945 (Press), 15 November 1922; No.222 (Mis), 10 March 1922; S. Theodore Baskaran, op.cit. p.26-29.
30. Andhra Patrika, 6 April 1921; Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, op.cit., pp.141-42.
These were basically issued to inform the people of the important events happening in other parts of India. To these were added contextual interpretations which, of course, were invariably loaded with many myths, so that they would be easily internalised by the illiterate masses into their consciousness.

In a Telugu book entitled "Swarajya Prapti Sandhanamu", written by P. Narayana Sastri, Mahatma Gandhi was pictured as:

Who is the thunderbolt (the weapon of god Indra) to break into pieces the great mountains of the boldness of heart of the westernness (the British)? Who is the sun to the gleaming lotus - like face of the closed lotus - like sportive demesne of India? Who is the treasure of intellect, which is relieving the Indians, whose souls have become subject to the evil guesses of the Hun (the British) warriors? Who makes easy, and shows the series of actions respected by the world, which are hazardous for others? Who has acted pertinaciously, to make the Indians enjoy the supreme happiness of independence? Is it possible to describe Mahatma Gandhi, who possesses such qualities who is very peaceful, and who has unlimited self-control. (Emphasis added).

31. Due to space constraint we have selected only few works as general examples from the mass of published material. For example see, GOM., Pub. Dept., G.O.No.740 (Mis), dt. 22 December 1919; No. 243 (Mis), 2 May 1919; Nos. 276-77 (Mis) (Confid.), 13 May 1919; No. 434 (Mis), 3 July 1920; Nos.530-3 (Mis), 17 August 1920; Nos. 532-33 (Press), 17 August 1920; Nos. 590-91 (Mis), 18 September 1920; Nos. 618-19 (Press), 27 September 1920; Nos. 627-28(Mis), 29 September 1920; No.212 (Mis), 12 April 1921; No.594 (Mis.), 14 September 1921; No. 791 (Mis), 12 November 1921; No. 816 (Mis), (Press), 19 November 1921; No. 812 (Press), 18 November 1921; No. 559 (Mis), 4 July 1922; No. 844 (Mis), 21 October, 1922; No.222 (Mis), 10 March 1922; No. 790 (Mis), 3 October 1922; No. 367 (Mis), 29 April 1922; No. 904 (Mis), 3 November 1922; No. 466 (Mis), 26 May 1922; No. 331 (Mis), 15 April 1922; No. 793 (Mis), 3 October 1922; No. 750 (Mis), 18 September 1922; No. 311 (Mis), 6 April 1922; Nos.942 (Mis), and 967 (Mis), 15 & 21 November 1922; No. 695 (Mis), 28 August 1922; No. 791 (Mis), 3 October 1922; No. 390 (Mis), 6 May 1922.

It was said that "at some time, it (the British) will be reduced to powder" and the British would be commanded by Gandhi and his aides — "two fierce Muhammadan Lions (Mohamad Ali and Shaukat Ali)" — to "give 'swaraj' to the Andhra", saying "Take it". In another Telugu book the people were asked not to cooperate with the British and were assured that "the yarn of the disc in the hands of god Vishnu will hunt the enemies (the British). Then will come the kingdom of liberation". Utter hatred and contempt for British Government was stirred up in popular perception. It was said that the taking up of the "vow on non-cooperation devotedly should be the religious duty" of all. To quote further:

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33. Ibid., p.14 (in original, p.6, Stanza-20); During non-cooperation movement the district Congress Committees published huge amount of propaganda material. For instance, on behalf of Guntur District Congress Committee, Kolavennu Ramakoteswara Rao Published "Sahayanirakarana" (non-cooperation) and "Punjabu Durantalu", and Madabhushi Narasimha Chari had written "Asahayodhyama Vijayam" (Victory of Non-cooperation). Many books were also written using Gandhi's speeches. Important among them were the works of Dr. Pattabhi Seetaramaiah's "Mahatamuni Updesalu" (Teachings of Mahatma) and Cherukuri Narasimham's "Swarajya Darpanamu" (Mirror of Swarajya) and "Sasanasabhalu" (Legislative Councils). Published on behalf of "Swarajya Grandhamala" these works helped to strengthen the national consciousness among the people. See, Madala Veesabhada Rao, op.cit.,p.68; also see, Andhra Patrika, 14 October 1921, "Mahatma Gandhi Aarogya Digdarsani", "Mahatmuni Mahima" (Glory of Mahatma), "Asahayodhyama Vijayam" and "Naukhati Tamasha" (Joke of Job), were the popular works published by PopularSCadashis Stores, Peddapuram, East Godavari district. See, Andhra Patrika, 1 February 1922.


There is the authority to wage war. As soon as you had birth on the earth, war has happened to you. It is the prescribed duty to break the enemy (the British) to pieces, without hesitation.

Through the abandonment of anger, and the attainment of non-violence are the two ways of righteousness; know this, O, mind! That it is the prescribed (duty) to kill the sinners and the traitors to the world (the British) .... Arise Quickly.

If you do not wage this war of righteousness, 'eminently' fame will be uprooted; the great Swadharma (one's own duty) will be spoiled; and sin will arise without fail. In order to throw out the Government of the aliens (the British) self-Government should be set up as a substitute for it.

No doubt, Mahatma Gandhi as a person, was far away, heard of mostly in tales told by the local Congress workers or leaders; and many peasants in the villages had hardly seen him in person except perhaps in the photographs, that too very rarely. Yet so alluring was his projected image that the peasants perceived him as the only 'saviour' whose role was "to implant justice in the land". The above quoted examples are self-explanatory and show this fascinating process of image building of Gandhi. One could also easily form a picture of how strong an imprint it made on mass psychology, when the image was passed on through the medium of Hindu mythology, which was deep-rooted in the cultural traditions of the rural masses and their collective world-view.

Apart from contemporary writings, the speeches by the local peasant Congress leaders also played a crucial role in the formation of peasant's perception of Gandhi, his anti-colonial struggle and 'swarajya'. During Chirala-Peralal struggle, D.

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36. So powerful and deep-rooted was his 'holy image' in peasant's collective consciousness that "inspite of the radicalism of popular actions", argues Sumit Sarkar there "was the irresistible tendency (on the part of peasantry) to keep on seeking shelter behind the Mahatma's banner". Sumit Sarkar, Popular Movements, & Middle Class Leadership in Late Colonial India, Perspectives & Problems of a "History from Below" (Calcutta, 1983), p.41.
Gopalkrishnayya, the leader of the movement, is said to have remarked that "a domestic quarrel (at Chirala-Peral) has developed into battle of Kurushetra". It was observed in the Legislative Council that D. Gopalkrishnayya "wants others to believe that Chirala, with its recalcitrant residents, represents 'Pandavas', the Government and their representatives 'Kauravas' and he 'Sri Krishna' (who) has come to save 'Pandavas'. By analogies of his melodious tone, Mr. Gopalkrishnayya has been fascinating the people here who are mostly uneducated and ignorant". The Chirala-Peral struggle thus had been projected into the popular mind not only as a political but also as a religious and moral fight. By elevating it to the level of the 'Kurushetra' war - a mythological tale deep-rooted in the people's culture - a broad cohesion was brought among the different social classes during the non-cooperation struggle which gave a powerful thrust to the movement. An apocalyptic twist to events was only one of its dimension. Many vague promises and distorted reports filtered in of the colonial state, Gandhi and his 'swarajya'. It was reported by a Sub-Inspector that Konda Venkatappayya in his speeches of Guntur on 26th July and 17th November 1921, not only preached non-payment of Rista but actually talked of "war against Government" and the audience were "exhorted to be ready to lay down their lives". It was said that the "audience (was)"

38. Ibid. It seems Gopalkrishnayya accepted Gandhiji as "a seer, creator, a leader of mankind and, above all, an 'Avatar', for establishing Swaraj in India within the period of grace 1921". He was always said to have "compared Mahatma to 'Vamana' who had driven away 'Bali' to the Nether World in three strides. He said that Gandhiji would also similarly drive away the British by taking the three decisive steps in the form of the Punjab, Khilafat and the Swaraj agitations". Quoted in Sarojini Regani, Highlights of the Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad, 1921), p.85.
informed that men have gone to Palnad to prepare it finally for Civil Disobedience, in other words rebellion. During his Pedanadipad tour, (on 27.2.1922) addressing the villagers, Ronda Venkatappayya said to have warned the peasants that "if they do not do as he says the authorities would increase the taxes." He also appealed "to religious prejudices". Further, it was reported that:

A "Karma" and a new Karnam who was present at the meeting...corroborated the S.I. in regard to the allegation about Government imposing new taxes if they pay 'Kists': he says 60 new taxes and I understood there is in this same allusion to taxes on all parts of the body including women's breasts etc., a reminiscence I suppose of ancient days in India. A ryot of Pedanandipad who was obviously reluctant to give evidence but when confronted with his statement ... he admits that this guarded version is true ... (Emphasis added).

Throughout the non-cooperation period, in fact, special volunteers were sent to tour the countryside and deliver "violent speeches calculated to stir up racial animosity and contempt and hatred of Government among the villagers". As a result of this propaganda a particular type of perceptions started crystallising in peasants consciousness. To quote further from the Government report "It was observed that large number of villagers believed that he (Gandhi) would get their taxes reduced and the Forest Regulations abolished. They had been prepared for this by the

39. Proceedings of the Additional District Magistrate T.G. Rutherford, Guntur, Mls., Case No. 12 of 22 dt. 18.3.1922 in C.O.M., Pub. Dept., G.O.No.297 (Misc.) (Confid), 24th April 1924, p.43; Ronda Venkatappayya himself stated that he used to illustrate instances from the Puranas and justify the philosophy of non-violence and the Gandhian programme of non-cooperation. See, Kishna Patrika, 6 August 1921.
40. G.O. No. 297, Ibid., p.44.
41. Ibid., pp.44-45. It was alleged by the Government that "his allegation of new taxation, a subtle attempt to excite his audience who were already feeling the effects of the positive measures adopted for realising the taxes they had refused under the persuasion of accused and such as he". Ibid., pp.45-46.
unscrupulous and lying hopes held out to them by the lectures".

(Emphasis added).

Gandhi's "Swarajya" was projected as "Rama Rajya" in popular speeches. For instance, let us see the speech delivered by Royyuri Achutaramayya of Bezwada at Robertson Chowk, Masulipatam, on 10th November 1921. "We intend starting a righteous government, destroying the present government. This is satanic Government. This must be destroyed and Rama's Government should be established". Appealing to the masses he said that "this Government is not going to exist. Ruin has come. 'Pride goeth before fall'. Its fall has come .... Is not the incarnation of 'Kalika' coming on a white horse? It means he is riding on the white man. So Gandhi is incarnation of 'Kalika'. What I want to say to you is that the time has come for not paying taxes. Adopt civil disobedience. Unless this Government is really destroyed we cannot establish another Government".

Interestingly the description of the "satanic" British Government was very vivid. "This Government has violated the modesty of women. This Government has opened fire upon the

42. It was reported in the Government sources that in Rayachoti taluk of Cuddapah district "a number of agitators from Guntur .... joined by a few local recruits .... penetrated the remotest villages, apparently in pursuance of a well thought out plan to stir up and organise defiance of constituted authority by the masses." All the quotes are from letter from A.Upendra Pal, B.A., Acting Collector and Dt. Mag., Cuddapah, to the Secretary to Government, Judicial Dept., dt. 10th January 1922, No. C.1/Tour, in G.O. No. 121 Judicial (Confid) Dept., dt. 26th January 1922.
children of the Punjab. It has perpetrated horrors", and moreover "the Englishmen (were) earning their bread by pimping the Government, robbing our money and eating it". As for the role of 'rumour', it certainly contributed to the formation of the Gandhian image as a 'saviour from above' and the establishment of a 'Gandhi Raj' as a remedy for their grievances. Talking about the importance of 'rumour' Sumit Sarkar observes that "it is fairly obvious that the tremendous breadth of Gandhian movements cannot be explained purely by what Gandhi as a personality actually thought, stood for, or did. What we confront again and again is the crucial role of rumour in a predominantly illiterate society going through a period of acute strains and tensions". The 'rumour' gave a radical thrust to the peasants political action. During the Chirala-Perala struggle when the people refused to recognise the Village Panchayats being appointed by the Government, as a part of their civil disobedience movement, and formed their own Panchayats, the "rumour" was that "these people (were) forming Gandhi Sircar Unions". "Rumour" also went around that "these credulous people are gloating over the idea that when the history of Gandhi's

43. Prosecution and Judgement details of Royyuri Achutramayya in the court of the Addl. Dt. Mag., Kistna, C.C. No. 1 of 22 along with remarks by Advocate General, Madras and the Pleader and the extracts from his speech see, G.O. No.148, Pub. (Confid) Dept., dt. 17th February 1922; speaking about the consequences of the British rule he said to have remarked that "they have subjugated our country. They have subjugated the trade, they have subjugated our heads. What are merchants? How are these foreign merchants earning money? With the weeping of how many women who spin with the Charka do these persons make money? -- By your foreign trade see how many weavers they have caste out".

44. Sumit Sarkar, 'Popular' Movement, op.cit., p.43.
'Swaraj' is written, Chirala will occupy the first page'. It was reported on 2nd June, 1921, that some convicts escaped from a jail based upon the 'rumour' that "the British rule was on the point of yielding to Gandhi's 'Swarajya'".

Many 'rumours' associated with Gandhi 'Swarajya' in fact, gave an interesting twist to the mass radicalism during the civil disobedience movements in Andhra. For instance, in Guntur 'rumours' were spread about the outcome of 'Gandhi Raj'. Word was spread that once the 'Swarajya' has been established Gandhi would be able to give back the jobs of resigned village officers; Gandhi would restore the lands auctioned off to recover land revenue back to the original landholders and so on. The classic example was the arrest of Unnava Lakshminarayana and others in Palnad in July 1921. Once the news of arrest reached Guntur and other districts, it was transformed into a 'rumour of the starting of war against British in Palnad'. It was reported in Kistna Patrika that "the whole Andhra Province was excited


47. Andhra Patrika, 28 January, 1922.
with the news. In Bezwada shops were closed on Sunday. Work came to a standstill in Ellore. People started telling each other that war has started. In support of those four (arrested) they said forty thousand are ready to go to jail. Hearing this news Mahatma Gandhi overwhelmed with joy, jumped up from his cot and fell down. The facts added with 'rumours' thus "produced a menacing situation for several days (in Guntur). Hartals were proclaimed... threatening crowds paraded the streets. Extra police were brought in".

Many 'rumours' also spread about the conduct of the troops in Guntur, Kistna and Godavari districts creating prejudice against them in the popular mind. Sometimes so widespread were the 'rumours' that even the Congress leadership believed them and took some hasty steps. An interesting example was the 'rumour' in Guntur about 'military hooliganism'. Nadimpalli V.L. Narasimha Rao, the Secretary of the APCC, sent a telegram from Guntur to the Hindu, the Swarajya and the Andhra Patrika on the 20th January 1922, in which the allegation was made that a woman had been raped to death by the soldiers stationed at Guntur, which of course, proved wrong. The exact wording of the complaint was as follows:

Hooliganism of soldiers. Chimakurti Gopalakrishnaiah, volunteer, was thrown down and kicked while he was begging the mob looking at the soldiers to disperse; he

48. Kistna Patrika, 6 August 1921 (Translated from Telugu).

49. Fortnightly Report, dt. FSG, 20th August 1921, No.3730-1, Pub., p.27.

50. Ibid., dt. FSG, 1st February 1922, No.862-1, Pub.

was taken to hospital; another Muhammandan was pursued and given a swelling check by the soldiers; a Vadda Uppara woman is reported to have been raped to death by number of soldiers, people still calm.

This stirred up fear and hate among the common people against the soldiers and the Government. For quite some time the situation in Guntur had become tense. In the course of the judicial pronouncement in the case of N.V.C. Narasimha Rao, the Judge remarked that "no sane person can contest the utter mischievousness of such a report and the way in which it spread like wild fire round the district is common knowledge, helped out as it was by 'volunteers' who pretended to protect the people against the excess of the troops". This kind of 'rumours caused fear and alarm among the common people in regard to their women folk wherever these troops were sent.

Apart from stage plays, mass meetings, speeches, and other forms of propaganda, singing of 'Kirtanas', poems and songs, conducting of 'bhajan' marches, etc., were used effectively to spread 'national consciousness' among the people. The perceptions which they disseminated through songs and poems were no way different from the perceptions embodied in the plays, writings and speeches. However, unlike in the other forms, songs and poems were able to cover a wider spectrum of Gandhian programme and national movement. There were many popular songs not only on Gandhi's 'holy image', but also on 'Khaddar', 'Charkha', temperance, triple boycott, Harijan uplift, national flag, repression in jails, 'swarajya', different stages of national

52. G.O. No.297, Ibid., p.54.
movement and political personalities, etc. Some of them are taken up for analysis below.

One of the most popular songs of the period was "Makoddi Telladoratunamu" by Garimella Satyanarayana, which, in fact, danced on the lips of every contemporary nationalist. In this song the author not only projected the basic contradiction with colonialism but also brought to surface popular grievances vis-a-vis colonialism, which inspired peasantry to become a part of national liberation struggle.

Chorus:

We don't want this white Lord's rule; God
We don't want this white Lord's rule

Pouncing on our lives, violating our modesty
||We don't want||

Stanzas:

1. Our harvests are abundant
Yet not a mouthful is ours;
Salt, touching it is wrong
He has thrown mud in our mouth;
Ch: Fighting with dogs - Sir
We eat food
||We don't want||

53. Many of the popular songs and poems on all these themes are collected into a single volume by Gurajada Raghavasarma (ed.), Jaateeya Geetalu (Nationalist songs) (Telugu, Hyderabad, 1973); also see, Andhra Patrika and Kistna Patrika for years 1920-1922; Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, op.cit., pp.84-122. Some of them are collected along with their tunes. See the oral history collection of the project on the Indian national movement by Prof.Bipan Chandra, et.al., of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

54. Sarojini Kegani and Davulapalli Ramanuja Rao (ods.), Deosam Filu ("Call of the nation", Telugu, Hyderabad, 1972), pp.11-18. Only Stanzas, 1, 5 to 6, 8 to 9, 13 to 16, 30, 33 to 34 and 37 are translated out of total 39.
2. Locking the lips, with 144 section - (he) says not to speak,
Not to sing a song and
Not to cross him and go;
Oh! ... forces ruin upon us
||We don't want||

3. Imposing, horrible laws - (he) sucked all our energies;
(He) shattered all the families
Our saries were removed
And looted our gold (wealth);
(He) dances in tune with the rich
||We don't want||

4. Despite the loss of harvest (he) refuses tax remissions,
(He) sends Karmoni to us
With them (he) sends Tehsildar
If they refuse, (he) dismisses them
In our house (he) troubles us like this
||We don't want||

5. Year by year, (he) imposes more 'kist'
and claims this as his
We were asked to till (the land) for hire,
He asks us to die with burning stomach (hunger)
Oh! of the slaves (he) wants to be the King
||We don't want||

6. When we go to the School, wearing Gandhi cap,
he denies entry;
"Charkha", he says, shouldn't be in the School
Removing the cap he beats us on our backs;
"Charkha" the embodiment of crime against King
||We don't want||

7. Hundred Malabar residents, stuffed in one compartment;
(He) won't pour water in their throats,
God! even air was not allowed to enter;
How could you chase away his cruelty, God?
||We don't want||

8. With (God) Gandhi, 'Bharat Mata' performed great 'tapasya';
The Goddess of 'Dharma' appeared and
Said, all desires would be fulfilled,
This started a fright in the hearts of 'Doras'
||We don't want||
9. Hot, hot meat of the foetus of pregnant cows,  
    (he) likes very much;  
    (he) slaughtered our milk cows,  
    And spoiled our religion;  
    Our hard of pregnant cows,  
    Failed to return home  ||We don't want||

10. Goddess "Charkha", with a smiling face,  
    (is) singing a hearty song  
    Famine is starving in its glow (rays)  
    And freedom is roaming in its midst,  
    When there is a flag to smash the glories of 'Doras'  
    ||We don't want||

11. With pure glow, the bride of freedom,  
    awaiting in the jail  
    Wearing the (flower) prayer garlands  
    She would 'chit chat' with you;  
    Leave this dying empire and come to jail  
    ||We don't want||

12. Opening your wings, with absolute freedom,  
    You can freely wander there  
    There you can climb the ladder of freedom,  
    There you can get the praises of God; and  
    The debts due to the mother (land) can be repaid  
    ||We don't want||

13. The lamps of love and universal peace  
    were lighted in this whole world  
    Gandhi has translated this new writing;  
    Freedom, has been spouting with our strength;  
    Here, there is no difference between strong and week  
    ||We don't want||

Another song by Gurajada Appa Rao, written much before the non-cooperation movement was a very popular song during those days and indeed even today, for it roused the general sentiments of nationalism among Telugu people.

    Love the motherland brother  
    Develop the goodness brother  
    stop your empty words (and)  
    Think of a worthy (deed)!!

55. Ibid., pp.1-3. Only Stanza Nos. 1 and 10-14 are translated from Telugu.
Sacrifice some personal benefits
And help your neighbour
Country means not the soil
Country means the people!

Hand in hand, together (our)
Country's people should walk
All nationalities and religions
Should behave like brothers!

If religion is different so what?
If people exist with a common soul
Nationalism would rise and develop
Shining bright in the world!

A great tree called nation
Should blossom flowers of love
Watered with kindred's sweat
(It) should yield riches as crops!

Humbly hidden among foliage
'Kavittha Kokila' (singing bird) should speak,
Hearing (those) words, respect (love)
For motherland should sprout!

There were numerous songs sung in the meetings, 'bhaajan' marches etc., praising the divine qualities of Gandhi's charismatic personality. He was identified either with the mythological heroes or with the 'magical' and divine powers of gods. He was said to have descended to save people from their troubles and bless them with 'swarajya'. To quote a few examples:

56 As examples I have translated only few stanzas from each song or poem. For full text of those songs, Gurajada Raghava Sarma, op.cit., see for song: "Sakhudhi! Gandhi Mohatmu Chuheetiva Leeda? Chepumu", "Jagadrakshulu Gandhi Mohatmu", "Mohatmu Gandhi", "Gandhi Prabha", and "Anta Gandhimyyam", pp.154, 201, 206, 214 and 221 respectively. Many books were published popularising songs, poems and 'bhaajan kirtanas'. Examples were "Bharatodbhavamu", "Swarajya Bhaajana Kirtanalu", "Desecya Kirtanalu", "Desecya Padamu", "Ramadandu Paata", "Swarajya Padyomulu" (150 songs) and "Panjabu Paata", Andhra Patrika, 14 October 1921 and 1st February 1922.
1. Friend, did you see Mahatma Gandhi? Or not? Tell me
   \[\text{[Friend]}\]
   He came yesterday, day before - not glimpsed with full satisfaction?
   Know thee, he is 'Sri Krishna'; don't become a fool without realising it
   \[\text{[Friend]}\]
   To remove Indians' troubles, born "Vasudeva"
   Alias God 'Krishna' - (as) he (Gandhi), don't be deceived
   \[\text{[Friend]}\]
   Within one year - 'Swarajyam' would certainly be
   Bestowed on us by this God (Gandhi) only; Listen
   \[\text{[Friend]}\]
   Oh! we can't comprehend the God; Ignorant
   'Kalika' ruined herself not knowing God Rama
   \[\text{[Friend]}\]
   (By "Kondapalli")

2. Gandhi Mahatma is the saviour of the world,
   All of you, people know (it);
   To establish 'dharma' in the world,
   Hari (Vishnu) was born as Gandhi
   \[\text{[Saviour]}\]

3. To save us you have appeared on the Earth - Mahatma Gandhi
   To save us you have appeared on the earth
   When all the crops were destroyed - hearing the prayer of ryots,
   Who couldn't pay taxes, (you) saved (them); listening
   To the prayers of Khaira people (you) saved (them) -
   \[\text{[Mahatma Gandhi]}\]
   (By Mangipudi Venkata Sarma)

4. When Gandhi Mahatma started,
   Ha! ha! laughed the world - laughed
   \[\text{[Gandhi]}\]
   When Gandhi Mahatma Walked fast,
   Shivered the Earth Goddess - shivered
   \[\text{[Gandhi]}\]
   When Gandhi Mahatma laughed a Laugh,
   Appeared before the eyes 'Swarajyam' -
   appeared before the eyes
   \[\text{[Gandhi]}\]
   When Gandhi Mahatma renounced, (we)
   Got in our hands salvation - got in our hands
   \[\text{[Gandhi]}\]
   (By "Hazavaraju")
5. Everything filled with Gandhi – this whole world

Disobeying – the Government laws
Calling all – with blessing hand
Here is 'swarajya', here is freedom
Come, come, here – (he) called all generously –

(By "Demaraju")

In many of the songs the message was clear. Following Gandhi meant changing the order of domination and subordination. However, the changing of social order did not necessarily mean an internal radical change. Basically the establishment of "Gandhi rajya" would mean, both for intelligentsia and masses, the destruction of the edifice of colonial domination and ushering in a period of "honey and milk". One could also see a web of peasants aspirations woven round the utopian 'Swarajya'.

Moreover, the peasants precepts and aspirations were not just linked to the vision of 'millennium'. They were also very much concerned with their objective social and material conditions.

To illustrate our point let us see a peasants' folk song on paddy sowing – "Variyudpu Paata".

"Chandamama" (Moon), "Chandamama"

In need of help, "Chandamama"

1) Spread here and there too bundles of seedlings
2) Picking up a bundle (I) untied it
3) Holding it in the left hand
4) Two seedlings at a time
5) Planted/sowed in the field together
6) No harm, it won't float

57. "Variyudpu Pata" (Paddy sowing song) by P. Prakasa Rao, in The Upadhyaya Bodhini, Vol. IV, No. 3, August 1921 (Translated from Telugu).
7) (I) matched the alignment (of sowing) “Moon”

8) Always rains should come (in time) “Moon”

9) Always there should be early floods “Moon”

10) Always canals should come together (in time) “Moon”

11) *“Lakshmi Devi” (Goddess of prosperity) should guard us* “Moon”

12) Always ponds should overflow “Moon”

13) Always women folk should sing “Moon”

Therefore, the peasants viewed the rhythm of their life as a part of the wider natural phenomenon. Their mundane conditions were often linked with the rhythm of seasons and the mercy of the natural forces. Both natural and supernatural forces were thus linked with their precepts and aspirations. In many of the songs, propagated by the nationalist intelligentsia, both ‘Millionarian’ and mundane aspirations and concerns were linked with the Gandhian ‘Rama Rajya’ or ‘Swarajya’. It was precisely the rousing of these precepts and aspirations of the peasantry which produced radical social protests during 1920-22, irrespective of Congress hostility towards such mass actions. The emergence of Gandhian ‘avatara’ was projected as aimed at fulfilling these mundane aspirations. Gandhi himself had promised to fulfil these mundane aspirations through his ‘Swarajya’ and those promises were popularised by the nationalist intelligentsia in their songs. To quote one example it was repeatedly said that:

"If the Gandhian movement is Victorious"

Crores of Hindu coolie people
Adopting Charkha as their work
Would get plenty of cloth and food.

"If the Gandhian movement is Victorious"

Hindus and Muslims become well-wishers (of each other)
Muslims end cow slaughter thinking it
As horrible; we retain our cattle wealth.

"If the Gandhian movement is Victorious"

Burden of taxes being less, production increases
Famine leaves motherland faster
Pleasures of prosperity would blossom and thrive.

"If the Gandhian movement is Victorious"

Toddy shops would slowly disappear
Widely spreading making people poor
The Akbari department; would it not meet its end?

"If the Gandhian movement is Victorious"

Hard working weavers' labour ultimately
Bear fruit and would get them
So much food and money (prosperity) for ever.

"If the Gandhian movement is Victorious"

All the skills of handicrafts increase
All the daily necessities become cheap;
Making noble ideals flourish
With honourable and simple life style
People would thrive in prosperity.

"If the Gandhian movement is Victorious"

Thus these nationalist songs helped the intelligentsia to develop national consciousness among the masses. They also were instrumental in mobilizing them in favour of the non-cooperation movement in Andhra. In fact, the most fascinating pattern of mass mobilization was done with the aid of 'bhajans' and 'radhotsawas'. One of the important tasks of a village Congress propagandist was to conduct 'bhajans', where songs extolling Gandhi's virtues, his victories in struggles elsewhere and the
nir: o. clcs of hin • sw .. 1 rajya'

The songs, simple and direct, mixed with folk traditions were sung in the streets, at the functions in the houses, in market places, pilgrim gatherings, festival congregations, and political meetings, to politicise the masses and integrate them into the Gandhian movements. To keep the spirit of nationalism alive in the hearts of village people the Congress volunteers used to sing 'Kirtanas' mostly in "Bhupala raga, chapu talam", every day early in the morning. Both religious 'Kirtanas' and nationalist songs were sung by the volunteers. In fact, many traditional popular religious 'Kirtanas' were twisted and sung to popularise the 'miracles' of Gandhi and also mobilise the peasantry in favour of

59. As many as three hundred and sixty songs on different aspects of Gandhian movement were collected and published by Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Academy. See Gurujada Raghava Sharma (ed.), Jaateeya Geetalu, op.cit.

60. Between 1921 and 1924 Kavikondala Venkata Rao wrote number of songs in a very simple style and published them (around twenty) as a book. See Mitrupa Deesa Sanskritanamu (praising song of Motherland). It was observed that since many of these songs were sung in the Congress meetings and functions associated with national movement, they became very dear to the people and mobilised them in favour of the Gandhian movement. Modali Negabhushana Sarma, op.cit., pp.95-96 and 101-02; During non-cooperation in Pailnad to politicise and mobilise the masses, a Telugu book "Swarajyagita Punjajamu", written by Tirunagari Venkatanarasasuri was brought out by "Pailnad Granthalaya Sarphamu" (Pailnad Library Society) of Kurnnapudi, Pailnad Taluq, which "strongly advocated the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi in all its details", see G.O. No.750, Pub.Dept., (Confid), cit. 18th September 1922.
Traditionally it was through 'Kirtanas' that the village folk both articulated and expressed their aspirations, precepts and world view. In Andhra peasant society, the 'bhajan' congregations and the singing of 'Kirtanas' formed the basic mode through which the cultural values were disseminated. Therefore, adoption of this basic mode would mean the renewing of memo-

ries of past experiences, 'millenarian' aspirations and notions. These crystallised in the 'collective consciousness' of peasantry over a period of time. The particular language or words which they used in deifying Gandhi and his 'Rama Rajya' or 'Swarajya', activated many dormant 'millenarian' aspirations in the peasant consciousness. For "both in literature and in daily life, language articulates consciousness, orders experience, and makes possible shared consciousness and transformed experience".

This had a direct bearing on peasants militant political actions.

There were numerous instances of conducting 'bhajan' marches to communicate the political ideas of the nationalist leaders to the masses. They were also a powerful method of political

61. The Congress Committees were said to have maintained special artists to sing 'Kirtanas' during the political meetings. Madali Nagebhushana Sarma, op.cit., pp.113-17; "We will sing our way to freedom" had been the declared philosophical content of all the patriotic songs and 'kirtanas' as said by S. Satyamurthy and quoted in s. Theodore Baskaran, op.cit., p.29.

mobilization of illiterate peasantry in the villages. Whenever there were political meetings or protest marches, the peasants mostly led by the local nationalists used to come marching through the villages singing 'bhajans'. Those 'bhajan' marches were like whirlwinds. They usually started in a village as a small group but went on swelling in number by drawing more and more peasants into its band when they whirled through the villages. For instance, to attend the All-India Congress Committee session at Vijayawada in March-April 1921, the peasants came in groups marching through villages and singing 'bhajan kirtanas'. In the process they attracted huge "crowds" to Vijayawada. It was observed that during this session "to get a 'darshan' of them (Gandhi, Nehru, C.R. Das, Patel, etc.) more than two hundred thousand people from all parts of Andhra gathered together at Vijayawada. Several of them came on foot from nearby places holding 'bhajans' on their way and addressing the villagers on freedom and 'Swarajya'. They spent two days seeing the leaders and hearing their lectures. When they returned to their places they carried with them the message of non-violent non-cooperation and spread it among those who had not

63. For some instances see, Andhra Patrika, 17 and 20 January; 3 and 31 March 1921; 3 February 1922; Kistna Patrika, 6 April 1921; M. Venkatarangaiya, op. cit., Vols. II & III, Passim; Sarojini Regani, op. cit., Passim; Kristna Jilla Swatantra Porata Charitra (History of Krishna District Freedom Struggle) edited by Kalapala Surya Prakasa Rao (Machilipatam, 1975), pp.II-16.

64. Andhra Patrika, 2 April 1921; Fortnightly Report, dt. FSG., 4th April 1921, No.1799-I, Pub.
the good fortune to go to Vijayawada".

These 'bhajans' and prayers, however, did not confine exclusively to the Hindus. They were accepted both by Hindus and Muslims as a mode of communication and therefore were secular methods of communication and mobilization. For instance, to protest against the punishments meted out to Yakub Hussain and other nationalists, a hartal was organised in Gudivada town, Krishna district, on 27th February 1921. It was reported that:

All shops were closed. Labourers struck their work. Scavengers did not collect the refuse and sweep and roads. Carts were not moved. Bhairava Bhotla Venkata Subha Rao spoke in a main road meeting about Gandhi's programme and the spread of 'Swarajya'. Muslims in the mosques and Hindus in the temples prayed 'Eswara' (God) to give peace for the souls of Yakub Hussain etc. All the people (both Hindus and Muslims) observed 'Upavasam' (fast) from 12 to 3 p.m. At 3 O'clock when the people of Khilafat Committee walked in front, holding black flags in their hands to express their sorrow and reading Quran with great devotion, Hindus followed them behind, dragging a 'prabha' (cast) on which they placed the photographs of Gandhi, Maulana, Shaukat Ali Mohammad etc., and "Charkhas", and playing traditional musical instruments and drums sitting on the cast, led by the 'bhajan sangham' people. They marched through the main streets in a procession. After reaching the pond they conducted a meeting under a huge tree, presided over by Mohammad "Yusaf Saheb". People crowded till two furlongs.


66. Andhra Patrika, 3 March 1921, p.7. Translated from Telugu; For another example see, Ibid., 31 March 1921; also see, 17 and 20 January and 25 February 1921; Krishna Patrika, 6 August 1921.
To quote one more example, in Ramachandrapuram, East Godavari district, eight prominent non-cooperators were arrested in January 1922 for giving speeches in support of no-tax movement. The arrested persons were brought through the surrounding villages with 'bhajans' to conduct a protest meeting in Ramachandrapuram on 28 January 1922. By the time the 'bhajan' march reached the town, the "crowd" (mostly peasants) swelled to 3000. This area which was dormant till then as far as no-tax movement was concerned suddenly became alive with new enthusiasm. Such was the importance of 'bhajan' marches both as a mode of communication and method of mass political mobilization.

68. The 'radhotsavas' (traditional religious celebrations) and the festivals, especially conducting of 'prabhas' were used very

67. Andhra Patrika, 3 February 1922. Tenneti Satyanarayana, a well known rich peasant and the President of Ramachandrapuram Congress Committee, Ravipati Satyanarayana of Danguru and Zamindar of Paningipalli were the local leaders among eight arrested nationalists. Interestingly in R.C. Puram the hartal and the protest-meetings were preceded by women's processions, who just went around singing nationalist songs and prepared the people psychologically for the coming political protest meetings. Ibid., 1st February 1922.

68. "Radhotsavas" were the Hindu religious celebrations. Huge wooden carts kept in the temples on which idols of Hindu gods and Goddesses would be placed and dragged through the streets by the devotees with the help of specially made ropes, as part of Hindu festivals, pilgrims and religious celebrations.

69. "A 'prabha' literally means 'greatness' or 'Glory'. It is a well-known religious term in this part of the country (in Andhra) and stands for a huge, moving framework, built of wood or iron rods, in the form of a semi-oval arch and pasted with variegated, coloured cloths and some picture or pictures. The picture of some God is always carried on the 'prabha', particularly of that being whose greatness that particular structure is intended to glorify, and it is 'His prabha' or Fame that is carried aloft, on human shoulders, from door to door and from village to village, with music and 'Bhajana', and the pious populace freely give their
often to politicise the masses and mobilize them for the nationalist cause. The nationalist leaders' photographs, especially of Gandhi, used to be placed on 'radhas' along with idols of Hindu Gods and Goddesses and dragged by the devotees through the streets. The processions of these 'radhas' were also accompanied by 'bhajan' parties, who would sing in praise of Gods as well as Gandhi and his non-cooperation, in a simple and familiar language to the illiterate masses. It was observed that "If 'radhotsavam' is held in any village and if Gandhi photograph is not placed on it people used to become angry and refuse to drag the 'radha'. They, however, immediately drag it after placing the photograph and this has become a tradition". In fact, such instances were many in Andhra during 1920-21.

In Andhra, 'radhotsawas' were the most popular religious celebrations, in which all people would participate, without social (caste) and material differences. Even the communal distinctions were overshadowed by the universality of the 'utsawas' and the festivity associated with them. Therefore, the,  

Continued:

69. devout offerings to God - the rich out of their riches, the poor out of their poverty. The idea, in fact, is so very common in this part of the country (Krishna, Guntur and Godavari districts) that almost every villager knows the Day of his village 'Prabha' and enjoys it fully as a festive day;... sometimes even (by) lakhs of pilgrims, and they even serve as places for the barter or exchange of many an article of daily use for the people".


70. This observation was made in a speech by Govada Buchayya, in the 30th Guntur District Conference, held at Ponnur, in June 1921. Andhra Patrika, 13 June, 1921.

71. For some instances, see, Krishna Patrika, 26 March & 6 August 1921; Andhra Patrika, 17, 19, 20 & 31 Jan; 3 & 15 Feb.; 3, 14, 15, 17 & 31 March; 13 June 1921.
nationalists used the 'radhotsawas' as a mode to communicate nationalism to different social classes and also as a method of political mobilization. They indeed succeeded in creating a very wide social base for Gandhian politics. Once the spirit of nationalism and the image of Gandhi as 'messiah' was imprinted on the 'popular consciousness', the masses themselves took the initiative and insisted on placing Gandhi's photograph on the 'radhas'. A denial of such a request would either mean a mass non-cooperation or a violent clash. To quote one example, in Gunupudi village of Bhimavaram taluq, Godavari district, the people used to conduct 'Sri Someswaraswami Kalyana Utsawam' every year and the 'radhotsawam' being the most important part of the celebration. It was reported that in 1921 "for the 'radhotsawam', around 10,000 people came and decorated the 'Utsawa rangam' (ceremonial stage). The 'radha' was decorated with flags of different colours, 'Swarajya' flags, and green leaves. Through one Justice Party leader some efforts were made not to place Mahatma's photograph on the 'radha'. But who could violate the people's desire (to place Gandhi's photograph on the 'radha')? 'Radhotsawam' was a glorious success. That night, near the 'radha', the propagandists of non-cooperation spoke about the present national conditions and our responsibility. Four meetings were held in four corners".

Unlike 'radhotsawas', conducting of Gandhi 'prabhas' was very widely used to mobilize the masses. For a 'prabha' can be

72. For two of very many such instances see, Kistna Patrika, 26 March & 7 April 1921.

73. Andhra Patrika, 14 March 1921.
arranged without much trouble and few persons can easily carry it on their shoulders from house to house and village to village. Whenever there were political meetings or protest marches, the nationalist activists used to organise 'prabhahas' and march through the villages accompanied by 'bhajans' and thereby collect huge "crowds" in support of the movement or the meeting.

In August 1921, when Konda Venkatappayya was arrested in Guntur, a spontaneous hartal was organised. To attract "crowds" from nearby villages the nationalists organised one day "Tilak Sambaram" (festival) and took the photographs of Gandhi, Tilak etc., in a procession on a 'prabha', with music, drums and 'bhajans'. It was said that "even the coolie people rushed from many villages to Guntur saying 'there is Tilak Sambaram'. Children and women marched in the front singing nationalist songs. Around 10,000 poor people were fed with free food". In fact, in every town and village, where the national movement was dominant, taking out a procession with Gandhi and other nationalist leaders' photographs, accompanied by professionals playing music and drums and singing of patriotic songs and 'bhajan kirtanas', had become a familiar sight and a common method of political mobilization. For instance, on 16 January 1921, in Palakollu, East Godavari district, the Mahatma Gandhi's photograph was taken in a procession by placing it on a horse.

74. For some examples see, Note No.66; Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya said to have conducted many Gandhi 'Prabhahas' to politicise and mobilize the masses in favour of Chirala-Perala Civil Disobedience in particular and Gandhian non-cooperation movement in general. Gochti, Vol.III, No.1, April 1936.

75. Kistna Patrika, 6 August 1921.
cart. Around 400 people gathered in the end. A meeting was organised in a 'big temple' and resolutions approving the non-cooperation and other Gandhian programmes were passed. Bomma Naga Krishna Murthy, the working president of Narsapuram Congress Committee, spoke on non-cooperation and narrated the life of Gandhi to the people.

During the festivals Gandhi 'prabhas' were taken through the villages to propagate the 'miracles' of Gandhi and his 'swarajya', always accompanied by 'bhajans'. Both Hindus and Muslims participated in such processions. During 'Mahasiva Rotri' day in Pedacherukuru village, Bapatla taluq of Guntur district, all the people together manufactured a 'prabha' and took it in a procession after placing the photographs of Gandhi, Ali brothers, Lokamanya and other nationalist leaders on top of it. Uppuluri Lakshmi Narasimham preached to the people boycott, the establishment of Panchayats, the principals of non-cooperation, etc. Thus the 'radhotsawas' and the conducting of 'prabhas' were used very effectively to mobilize the masses, especially from the villages, in support of Gandhian movement and

76. Andhra Patrika, 19 January 1921; For some more examples see, 17, 20 & 31 January; 3 & 15 February; 3, 15, 17 & 31 March; 13 June 1921.

77. For example see, Ibid., 20 January; 3 Feb. & 3 March 1921.

78. Ibid., 15 March 1921. To quote one more example, during March last week 1921, a 'radhotsawam' was organised in Mangalagiri, Guntur district. For this festival, one 'Gandhi Prabha', decorated with nationalist leaders' photographs, had started from Gandhi pet, Guntur town and reached Mangalagiri after passing through Rakani and Namburu villages propagating "the miracles of Gandhi". In the process, a huge "crowd" of more than 60,000 people gathered to witness the festival. Near the 'radha' Konda Venkatappayya Pantulu and others lectured the people. Ibid., 31 March 1921.
nationalist programmes in the urban centres.

Apart from this particular projection of the national movement under the leadership of Gandhi, the peasants were also motivated by their own notions and hopes of the ultimate results of 'swarajya'. T. Prakasam faithfully recorded these hopes and aspirations in his autobiography. Describing the Pedanandipad no-tax campaign of 1922, he recorded that "all the ryots welcomed this non-payment of taxes movement in several ways. They imagined that 'swarajya' is coming so we can live happily without paying taxes". When I asked one ordinary peasant in Pedanandipad, what motivated him to support the no-tax campaign in 1922, he replied: "We were told by our local leader Veeraiah Chowdary that 'swarajya' would be coming soon and we thought we need not pay taxes to the Gandhian Government. These 'millenarian' aspirations were dominant in all sections of the peasantry. In the course of a full length discussion in the Madras Legislative Council on the necessity of a Bill to amend the Madras Revenue Recovery Act II of 1864 in view of the no-tax campaign in Guntur and other areas an interesting observation was made by one member:

We know that no one likes paying taxes and the prospect of escaping them would be very attractive


80. Recorded interview with Nuti Sriramulu of Pedanandipad on 22nd March, 1984. Interview is in Telugu. Peasants in Cuddapah district also thought that Gandhi "would get their taxes reduced and the Forest Regulations abolished". G.O. No.121, Judicial (Confid), Dept., dt. 28th January 1922.

to the simple and unthinking men who would not realise the danger he is risking by supporting such a movement. On the other hand, he will perceive therein that the prospect of the "millenium" in the shape of the promised 'swarajya' of 'no-tax' was materialising and was in sight. (Emphasis added).

The poor and the middle peasants, right from the beginning, read between the lines of the Congress programme and Gandhian 'Swarajya', by September 1921 only "few months away", with their own perception of 'millenium'. This interestingly was far from what the local leadership or the Congress for that matter was advocating. With many rumours floating in the air about the 'Gandhi raj' on the horizon, the peasantry pressurised the local Congress to take up no-tax campaigns immediately. For they perceived the Gandhian 'swarajya' as 'Rama Rajya', where no taxes would break their back. Many of their 'millenarian' aspirations were attributed to the Gandhian political movement. No doubt, the Congress leadership was worried about these new meanings attributed to their programme. To quote one example:

"We are not blind to the seriousness of the steps, nor were the ryots who are immediately concerned with the question (no-tax movement). We took pains to impress them with the fact that they were...

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82. Muhammad Ali who was travelling with Gandhi in course of his South India tour on September 1921, was arrested at Waltair. It was reported that immediately after the arrest, Gandhi in his speech to some 2,000 people waiting for their 'dharsan' on the platform said to have asked them: "This is not the time for anger. Observe three important things. Burn foreign cloth, wear swadeshi cloth. In three Months Swaraj is coming" (Emphasis added). Kistna Patrika, 17 Sept. 1921, Editorial.

83. T. Prakasam, op.cit., p.206; Interview with Nuti Sreeramulu, Pedanandipad, dt. 22nd March 1984; also see, footnote Nos. 1 and 2 in this chapter; G.O. No.121, Judicial (Confid) Dept., dt. 28th January 1922; Andhra Patrika, 11, 19 and 28 January 1922.

84. Janmabhumi, 12 January 1922, p.2; Also see Andhra Patrika, 10 January 1922.
not to suspend payment merely with the views of saving money or with the equally foolish hope that in Swaraj there would be no taxes. Hence we took care to add the clause that the taxes should be paid to Government the moment the Congress or the AICC gave instructions to that effect. (Emphasis added).

But the meaning which the peasantry attributed to the no-tax move, when they sprang "forward declaring in no dubious language (their) determination 'to see it through'," during the APOC meeting in January 1922, was quite different. They assumed that by taking up civil disobedience, 'Gandhi Raj' or 'Swarajya' could be established where there would not be any taxes. That was why when the Congress called off the no-tax movement on the instance of Gandhi, when it was half way through, the peasants showed reluctance to come into the fold of the Congress and thus continued for some more time without paying taxes.

Interestingly this 'millenarian' content was also inspiring and moulding the aspirations of the rich peasantry, the leaders of the movement on the rural side. In the words of Sir Lionel Davidson (in the Madras Legislative Council) "the case we are dealing with now is not that of the distressed ryot who wants time to pay (land-revenue and other taxes). We have been told again and again that the people who would not pay are rich and well able to pay at once. When asked why they do not pay they say 'Gandhi Raj has come and we are not going to pay taxes'. That is the attitude we have to deal with".

85. Ibid., 19 January 1922, p.4.


Therefore, when the external world filtered through the perceptions of the peasantry it had a very powerful impact in shaping the consciousness and rousing the expectations of these agrarian social classes. The apocalyptic notions and 'millenarian' aspirations that had been implanted over the decades in the popular mind now took on a new perspective. This psychological phenomenon brought about a cohesion in the no-tax campaign. When the Government officials went to effect distrants in the villages where the land revenue had not been paid, they faced the manifestation of this psychological phenomenon. It was observed by the Government officials that due to the non-cooperation "it took a considerable time to identify individual houses. All the doors were closed. The first house was empty; nothing was inside. In the next house, the women marched out and refused to give any information". In the course of my interviews, the peasants in Pedanandipad narrated this fascinating account of a mass reaction which reveals the formation of 'collective consciousness'. I was told that whenever the Government officials accompanied by the military came to the villages to effect distrants, the peasants dumped all their belongings in the fields and left their houses empty.

88. It was observed by the Government that "no one gave any reason for not paying his dues except that others did not pay and therefore he would not. One of the volunteers when questioned, said he had no personal complaint whatever, but 'Gandhi Swaraj' was said to be coming and they were not to pay the taxes and so on. That was the state of affairs which Mr. Rutherford found in a typical village". Ibid., p.2190.

89. Ibid., (Emphasis added).

90. Recorded interviews of Koduri Sriramulu and Nuti Sriramulu on 22nd March 1984 at Pedanandipad; Also see the report of journalists on their tour in Pedanandipad, firka, Andhra Patrika, 17 January 1922.
No wonder, this "attempted revolution" of no less than 282,360 pottadars, from whom the land revenue was due in Guntur district alone had caused fear in the hearts of the colonial rulers. It was rightly felt that "if (the ryot) is allowed to go on for two or three months postponing payment of taxes without anything happening to him except attachment notices, he will think that immunity from taxation is materializing and that 'Gandhi Raj' is really coming. And naturally he will be pleased". However, when the Congress at the instance of Gandhi called off the mass civil disobedience protests along with general non-cooperation movement, the Government stepped in with all their repressive weapons and crushed the movement.

The conjuncture between the peasants' own perception of Gandhi and his movement and the Congress's projected version of Gandhi and his 'Swarajya' had ultimately produced a radical frame of mind and its sum effect was a crucial shift in the national movement from the accepted forms of struggle to the more radical forms of political protest. This was the time when immense peasant pressure from below forced the reluctant Congress local leadership and thereby Gandhi to include the non-payment of revenue as a radical part of the political action programme to establish 'Gandhian Swarajya' as perceived by the peasantry at the local level. Analysing the peasant movements in Oudh, Kapil Kumar argues that "It is precisely from this juncture onwards that the Congress leadership attempted to establish its dominance


92. See note Nos. 1 to 3.
over the peasant's initiative in the national struggle". However, the Congress could establish its dominance on these rural protests also because of the peasants' perception of Gandhi and non-cooperation movement which were invariably mixed with their aspirations. In other words, since the peasants perceived the national movement as their movement and Gandhi as their "messiah" who came to "liberate" them from their poverty, they always sought the protection and leadership of Congress, even though Gandhi himself was personally throwing his weight against the integration of local peasants' grievances with his movement. Any form of radical political action which might bring or integrate internal contradictions, in this case the peasant problems in zamindaris, with the national movement was contradictory to the form of Gandhian nationalism and this was of course experienced by the peasantry, in practice, for the first time during non-cooperation period. The second jolt to their aspirations and hopes from Gandhi was administered during 1930-34 civil disobedience movement, which we have examined elsewhere.

The analysis thus shows the pattern of mass mobilization in support of the Gandhian movement. It also shows not only the organisational hold of Congress but also the mechanism of establishing the 'hegemony' of Gandhian ideology and method over the masses and the national movement.

The spread of Village Congress Committees with reserves of

trained cadre, as a part of the constructive programme in the first stage of the non-cooperation movement, helped the Congress to mobilize different social classes in support of the Gandhian movement. Apart from spreading the Gandhian ideas and forms of struggle among the masses, the Congress propagandists were also instrumental in mobilizing the masses in different ways using different methods of communication. Many plays were staged in the villages with political themes. Singing of national songs by 'bhajan' parties, the parading of students and Congress workers playing musical instruments with popular 'bhajan kirtanas' (devotional songs) and national songs, processions with Gandhi and other nationalist leaders' photographs placed on carts, or, during religious ceremonies, the placing of Gandhi's and other nationalist leaders' photographs along with idols of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, the deployment of 'Santi Sona' or 'Rama Dandu' (peace army consisting of specially trained Congress workers) to manage annual religious festivals and 'pushkaras' and the performances of 'Barikathas' and 'burrakathas' to spread patriotism mixed with popular historical and mythological themes or stories, were the most important medium used to politicise and mobilize the people in support of the Gandhian forms of struggles.

All this propaganda exerted a powerful influence, to use the words of Georges Lefebvre, upon the evolution of the 'collective mentality.' The formation of this 'collective mentality' through

plays, books, leaflets, speeches and songs not only gave a coherant political expression to the scattered spontaneous expression of peasants dissent but also created the 'national consciousness' which helped the Congress in bringing about all-class harmony during the national movement. The expression of different social grievances vis-a-vis colonialism (these may not necessarily be taken up as part of the programme of the political movement but were popularised during political agitation) was a very effective way to create and strengthen 'national consciousness' and to transform it into a powerful anti-colonial movement. This was, of course, done very well by the contemporary nationalist intellectuals.

This projection of Gandhian image and his movement was a very tactful move on the part of Congress propagandists. It became an emotional canaliser of peasants frustration or grievances against colonial state into the general political movement. And it was indeed a very effective instrument in recasting the peasant personality into a new political mould. In other words, the people were aware of the basic exploitative and repressive character of the colonial state since it stemmed out of their day-to-day social experience. Therefore, they could perceive the basic contradiction even though in a scattered and vague form.

35. It was observed by Rabindranath Tagore in 1917 that England as an "abstract being is ruling India.... But we, who are governed, are not a mere abstraction. We, on our side, are individuals with living sensibilities. What comes to us in the shape of a mere bloodless policy may pierce into the very core of our life.... In this reign of the nation, the governed are pursued by suspicions; and these are the suspicions of a tremendous mass of organized brain and muscle. Punishments are meted out, which leave a trail of miseries across a large bleeding tract of the human heart...." Sir Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism (London, 1917), pp.13-14.
This vague consciousness was now transformed and brought to the surface as a powerful national consciousness, once the peasantry were exposed to the Congress Propaganda machine. As a result, the peasants perceived Gandhi and his anti-colonial struggle as a 'national struggle' against the "White Doras". This general perception of Gandhi as a 'messiah' from above who came down to drive away the "devilish" British and turn the world upside down with all good things incorporated into it, helped the Congress to draw the peasantry into the Gandhian national movement.

Gandhi and the other nationalist leaders were elevated to such a level in the perception of masses, that whenever there was a 'cart dragging' ceremony, be it in the major Hindu pilgrim centers or during the religious functions for various Gods and Goddesses in the villages, the photos of the nationalist leaders (invariably Gandhi) were placed by the side of Hindu idols. The popular religious traditions, pilgrims and temples had thus become centers of political propaganda. Nationalism as an anti-colonial ideology had even penetrated the well known religious stories told in 'Harikathas' in the villages. More often the Hindu religious Gods and Goddesses were seen serving the cause of nationalism, a sure way of catching the popular mind. For instance, in "Navayugarambhem" or "Gandhi Kothadayam", Lord Krishna comes on the stage and says "why does slavery prevail in India which is regarded as the crest of the jewel of the world? Tell us why the (British) rulers have been acting

96. For examples, see, Andhra Patrika, 17, 19, 20 & 31 January; 1-2 February; 3, 4-15, 17 & 31 March; 13 & 28 June; 28 July; 2, 11 & 23 August 1921.

97. Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, op.cit., p. 117.
recklessly having forsaken justice."

So strong was the mass perception of Gandhi as a "messiah" or 'saviour' or a 'semi-God', that even a slightest provocation on the part of the Government to resist the attempts of the Congress volunteers or the masses to place his photograph on the 'radhas' met with violent mob attacks and sometimes with bloody riots. This pattern of mass politicisation and mobilization in support of the Gandhian non-cooperation movement was a remarkable success. Ultimately the nationalist intelligentsia and the non-cooperators were able to push forward the basic contradiction and to some extent the peasants grievances via-a-via colonialism and thereby influence the perceptions of the peasantry. Its heavy reliance on the religious traditions and beliefs at one level ensured a wide mass mobilization in support of the national movement. However, this method of political mobilization had its negative effects also, especially on the peasants' class consciousness. As we have seen earlier, the peasants by virtue of their association with the Gandhian national struggle started perceiving their grievances against colonialism and class grievances, especially in the zamindar as a part of basic contradiction and pressurising the Congress at the grass root level to integrate their demands and radical political protests with the general anti-colonial movement in Andhra. But these


99. For instance, see, Kistna Patrika, 26 March and 8 April 1921.

100. See Pedanandipad and Palnad civil disobedience movements in Chapter IV.
powerful methods of mass mobilization adopted by the Congress also carried with them the power of indoctrinating and controlling the mass psychology and fixing it within a particular mould of 'Gandhian logic of nationalism'. Consequently, in spite of the peasants' radicalism and their persistent demand to take up their grievances as major demands during the national liberation struggle, their radicalism was watered down by the Gandhian leadership, especially in the Zamindaris and thereby was retarded the growth of peasants' class consciousness developing as part of the national movement. Gandhi had established such a powerful hold on the peasants' psychology, in spite of the withdrawal of civil disobedience movements through the help of local level Congress leadership, at a time when they were reaching a higher form of protest, without achieving anything concrete, and the consequent disillusionment with Gandhian politics, the peasantry still believed in his 'miracles' and supported him in the ensuing political movements.

Thus the very nature of shaping of perceptions and the methods of mass political mobilization structured in the traditional cultural idiom familiar to the mass of illiterate peasantry, no doubt, had brought about a conjunction between the mass radical political protests and the 'paradigm' of Gandhian national movement. The Congress leadership in the name of harmonising the classes interests and activities within the framework of the interests of nation, had formulated the above specified political precepts, tactics and strategy. However, this form of political tactics and strategy had unfortunately generated a weakness in the anti-colonial struggle by bringing into it an imbalance
between agitation and propaganda on one side and concrete political programmes on the other. For throughout this period, the nationalist intelligentsia was instrumental in bringing to surface not only the awareness of the basic contradiction, but also the peasantry's contradictions vis-a-vis colonialism and the class contradictions in the zamindaris. Yet in practical politics, the Gandhian leadership was reluctant to take up peasant demands vis-a-vis colonialism as part of national liberation struggle, leave alone the internal class contradictions in zamindaris, even in a subterranean form.

Moreover, peasantry's initiative in seeking shelter behind Gandhi had its own implications in practical political struggle. On the positive side it strengthened the correct perception or positive consciousness of the peasantry, for they perceived the anti-colonial struggle as the primary and the basic task. This also shows that they also correctly perceived the historical necessity of linking their grievances and class aspirations with the basic anti-colonial struggle in the colonial situation. The negative aspect of the Gandhian precepts and strategy had been that the political projections made by the nationalist intelligentsia largely contributed to the establishment of the 'hegemony' of Gandhian politics over the peasantry in spite of the fact that their aspirations and class demands were not fulfilled by Gandhian politics. Ultimately what kept the peasantry within the confines of Gandhi's non-violent non-cooperation programme, despite their radicalism, was the influence of Gandhian precepts on popular collective consciousness and the powerful methods of mass political mobilization.