INTRODUCTION
Mass politics became a part of the Indian national movement at an all-India level in the second decade of this century. The sequence of events which paved the way for the participation of the masses in the national movement had started with the launching of the satyagraha against the Rowlatt Acts in 1919. The following year, at the Nagpur Session, the Congress Party reorganised itself to prepare it for the phase of mass politics. The process of graduating to common politics got a boost with the launching of the Non-cooperation Movement in 1921. Although Non-cooperation began as a movement primarily of the urban lower middle class, it quickly spread its influence to wider social groups and the Congress which was, till then, considered in official circles as a coterie of 'self-seeking babus' representing only a 'microscopic minority', attained a powerful popular base.

The national movement in UP was no exception. In the 1920s, for the first time, in the history of the province, new classes, groups, communities, castes and professions entered the political arena which had hitherto been, more or less the preserve of a few lawyers, administrators, landlords and bankers who rarely had any link with the middle and lower ranks of society.¹

¹ For details see C.A. Bayly, the Local Roots of Indian Politics, Allahabad. 1880-1920, Oxford, 1975.
The Non-cooperation Movement in UP, as elsewhere in India, was primarily an urban campaign. The major centres of this movement were cities and district headquarters where large numbers of people from widely varying social backgrounds participated. But the agitation did not remain confined to these larger centres only. It also covered the small market towns and distributing centres, generally known as gasbahs which were barely distinguishable from their rural surroundings. These gasbahs provided a good number of non-cooperators in the form of teachers, journalists, minor lawyers and students from petty land holding families and other people from a rural background. The original rural affiliations of these agitators affected the rural areas also. The emergence of a powerful and prolonged agitation of poor and middle peasants in some districts of the Awadh area of the province can be called a consequence of this impact, although this agitation had begun independently of non-cooperation.2

The non-cooperation movement also saw the beginning of the political life of a large number of leaders from UP, viz., Jawaharlal Nehru, P.D. Tandon, G.B. Pant, Sri Prakash, G.S. Vidyarthi and Lal Bahadur Shastri, under whose zealous and efficient leadership, UP became one of the most valuable strongholds of the national movement. The province

provided 3,28,966 members to the Congress in July 1921 and nearly 9 lakhs volunteers by the end of 1922. Apart from this, the province also witnessed the establishment of 137 national educational centres by July 1921 and among them the Kashi Vidyapith and Prem Mahavidyalaya of Mathura proved to be major training centres for Congress workers.

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Why and how did this kind of sudden and massive support emerge for the Congress? The first factor behind this massive support for the Congress could be the discontentment among the urban as well as rural masses. Second, the establishment of Municipal Committees and District Boards provided the political minded urban middle class an experience which led to demands for more representation. Third, the establishment of a large number of schools and colleges which provided education to a large number of urban middle class and the lack of employment which they faced after coming out of universities, left them discontented. Most important, the Congress, building upon the decades-old nationalist politics, was able to channelise these discontentments, reveal their roots in colonial rule and under Gandhiji's leadership bring the people out into active anti-imperialist politics by initiating truly multifarious, mass based forms of struggle.
In UP, out of a total population of 46 million in 1921, 89% lived in rural areas. In the same period, agriculture accounted for 74-76% of the province’s workforce, although its distribution was not uniform in all districts. The divisions of Western and Central UP had a relatively low share of agriculture in the workforce, around 66 or 67%, and a relatively high share of manufacturing, generally over 9%. While the divisions of eastern UP and Awadh generally had 80% of their workforce in agriculture and only 4-6% in manufacturing. Among them, Benaras was the most 'industrialised' division where around 70% of workforce was engaged in agriculture and 10% in manufacturing. In Meerut, on the western extreme of the province, 53% of the workforce was in agriculture and as much as 13% in manufacturing. In comparison to this, at the other end of the province, in Gorakhpur division, the figures were 85% and less than 5% respectively.

The Western divisions of the province, particularly Meerut and Agra, advanced in terms of 'urbanisation' and 'industrialization' since Mughal times, had been especially benefited by the coming of railways and improvement in communications which led to the influx of factory made goods and the general increase in commercial activity. The same thing applied to the districts along the Grand Trunk Road and

3. Census of India, 1921.

the main railway line between Delhi and Calcutta. The emergence of Kanpur as the industrial and commercial centre of north India was mainly due to this factor.

There was quite a rapid advance in industry after the First World War and the coming of protection from the Government. The number of factories registered under the Factories Act in UP rose from 222 in 1916 to 332 in 1927. The average number of daily workers employed in them increased concurrently from 68,172 to 88,319. An index of the expansion was the volume of goods traffic carried in and out of Kanpur city by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway which connected the city with Bombay. In 1902, this traffic amounted to 280,800 tons. In the year ending 31 March 1922, it was 310,000 tons and in 1927, it rose up to 436,900 tons.

Despite all this economic development, UP remained an overwhelmingly agricultural province. In UP, which comprised the two provinces of Agra and Awadh, we find three distinct land revenue arrangements. In the district of Benaras and its nearby areas, a permanent settlement of the Bengal type was made with individual landowners called zamindars. In the rest of the Agra province, the mahal (estate) rather than an individual was taken as the unit of settlement. While in Awadh, we find a taluqdar system which


was almost similar to the zamindari system but with a little more privileges to the taluqdars. However, despite the differences in the nature of original settlement, the structure of agrarian society was fundamentally, the same throughout the province in the 1920s and 1930s. The condition of the large number of lower peasantry remained very bad and they lived at a very low level of subsistence. In fact, the conditions in UP villages were probably worse than in most other parts of India. The province was more densely populated than Southern and Central India and was less developed in terms of irrigation facilities and urban employment opportunities than the Punjab and Western India. In addition to this, the rental demand on the subordinate sections of agrarian society in the province was far heavier than in other provinces. Even within the province, the Eastern divisions of Benaras and Gorakhpur were the most overcrowded and suffered most from the sub-division and fragmentation of holdings. But Awadh was the area worst off in terms of rack-renting and exploitation of sub-ordinate classes by the superior ones.

In the years immediately after the First World War, the people of UP were confronted by a severe economic crisis. The end of the war reduced economic opportunities. Nearly half a


million soldiers from the rural areas of the province, who had been recruited as combatants and non-combatants were now demobilised. There was also considerable industrial retrenchment with the closure of several mills and factories.

The prices of certain commodities such as cloth, salt and kerosene oil, had been rising throughout the war years. Further, in 1918, came a disastrous failure of monsoon. Foodgrain prices shot up, reaching an unprecedented height and declined only slightly over the next few years. The result was great suffering among rural as well as urban poor. These conditions of hardships considerably affected the poorer section of the society. But these were not the end of their hardships. The year, 1918, saw the the breaking out of worldwide epidemic of influenza which took more than three million lives in UP alone.9

Even in this situation, there were some sections in society like big traders, moneylenders and hoarders who made the best of the prevailing conditions. The landlords also, instead of reducing their demands, succeeded in extracting larger dues from their unprotected tenants. In fact, the rents rose rapidly in this period. It was against these miserable conditions and this oppression that large numbers of unprotected tenants and labourers in Southern and Eastern Awadh

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9. UP Administrative Reports, (1916-17 to 1919-20).
and some neighbouring districts rose in protest in 1920-21.  

In the cities and towns of UP, the economic dislocation after the war and the sharp rise in food prices affected not only the poorest, i.e., slum dwellers, beggars, petty vendors, transport workers and mill hands, but also the lower middle classes in general. Thus, people from several sectors were ready to respond to the nationalist messages and appeals which were widely propagated first in the towns and then in the rural areas.

Apart from these economic hardships which provided a background to the beginning of political activities in the province, there were certain other developments like constitutional innovations and educational advancements which affected the politics of the coming years.

In the years during and after the First World War, there were some important developments in local government in UP. In 1916, the UP Municipalities Act was introduced which provided for a 75% elected membership, with no more than two members on any board to be nominated by the Government. In 1922, the qualification for franchise in Municipal elections was lowered to the same level as that for voting in urban constituencies for the Provincial Council under the Government of India Act of 1919, thus creating about 120,000 voters in the municipalities in 1923 which rose to 150,000 in

In 1922, again, the UP District Boards Act was passed with the same voting qualifications. In the Act, Muslims obtained a especially generous representation, being assured of a voice on every district board. Where they constituted less than 1% of population, they received 10% of seats, where they numbered 1-5% they got 15%, where 5-15% they got 25% and where 15-30% they got 30% of the seats. Another feature of the Act was the provision of an elected non-official chairman and the complete exclusion of the official element.

But the most remarkable changes were made in provincial government through the Montagu-Chelmsford Constitution of 1919. According to this the legislative council in UP was to consist of 123 members, 100 of them elected with 30 seats reserved for Muslims. The franchise was also considerably extended to a total of over 1.5 million voters in 1920 and 1.6 million voters by 1926. However, this constitution was heavily biased towards the landowning classes and the return of a safe majority of the traditionally loyal landlords element was ensured.

At the same time educational facilities also improved substantially during these years. The number of recognised educational institutions rose from 12,912 in 1917 to 18,559 in 1922, an increase of around 44% and by a further 19% to

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12. Ibid.
22,068 in 1927. Concurrently, the number of students at these institutions also increased from 805,420 to 965,059 to 1,280,450 over the same period, a rise of around 50%. This expansion was especially striking at the university level. Earlier UP had just one university that of Allahabad, established in 1887. In 1915, Benaras Hindu University came into being and five years later, the Aligarh College was raised to the status of a university. In the same year, another university was opened at Lucknow and in 1927, Agra got its own university. So, in the period between 1917 and 1927, the number of students at universities and affiliated colleges in the province almost doubled from around 6000 to 12000. The demand for higher education was so great that, in 1927-28, the Benaras Hindu University had to turn down a thousand applicants. But the prospects for those who found admission and obtained degrees were not very good. The provincial government reported in 1929 that the number of graduates was increasing every year and it was very difficult to find employment for them.

All these developments engendered some remarkable political repercussions. The growth of literacy and education helped to spread political consciousness, and

youngmen and women with some English or vernacular education provided most of the active cadres of the Congress and other parties in the 1920s and 1930s. The lack of employment might also have made more people available for political work. At this point constitutional changes noted above provided them some more opportunities. The elections to local boards and provincial and central legislatures became important for various political parties for mobilisation and organization of these groups.

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The most serious and negative, and unfortunately permanent, development of the 1920s was the unprecedented growth of communalism. No less than 91 communal riots rocked UP between 1923 and 1927. The most frequent issues around which the violence occurred were the Muslims' demand for stopping music in front of mosques and the Hindus' demand for stopping cow-slaughter. Furthermore, communalism now became one of the main bases of political alignments.

A large number of factors contributed to the growth of communalism in UP during this period. Considerable growth of education in the 1920s without corresponding promises of employment, economic and social tension at the lower level of the society, coming of mullahs into politics during the Khilafat Movement and the style of Congress propaganda
frequently invoking things like Ramrajya which was misinterpreted by Muslim communalists, were some of the more important causes of communal disharmony. Another important cause was the broadening of the franchise simultaneously with the extension of separate electorates. This provided 'a built in temptation' for politicians to give sectional slogans to appeal to their religious, regional or caste groups. Tablique and Tanzim among Muslims were mainly a response to Hindu Suddhi and Sangathan. Even the Congress and Swarajists could not keep themselves completely sealed off from the communal views, though theoretically both of them boasted of being truly secular. Many communal leaders had close contacts with the Congress leadership. For example, in Benaras, the Swarajists and the Hindu Mahasabhaites were virtually the same people. Such close identification was bound to have negative consequences for the secular image of the Congress.17

Towards the end of the 1920s, however, a fresh wave of nationalist upsurge pushed the communal problem into the background. Beginning with the announcement of the Simon Commission in late 1927, popular protest began to gather force and UP was very much in the forefront in this new wave of

agitation. A new ferment was visible among the youth, and a spate of Youth Leagues were formed. By 1929, the province seemed well prepared to launch onto a new stage of political action, that signalled by the decision of the Lahore Congress in 1929 to inaugurate a movement of Civil Disobedience.

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The present work attempts a study of the nature and extent of the Civil Disobedience in the urban areas of UP. It concentrates on a span of four years (from March 1930 to May 1934). It examines for that period the state of the movement in the urban areas, its strength and weaknesses and the participation of different classes and groups in the movement. It considers the significance of government policies and actions and the attitudes and decisions of the Congress leadership towards these policies.

Any province could have served for a study of this kind. There were three factors for the choice of UP. First, the choice of UP has the advantage that it was in the forefront of nationalist agitations during the last three decades of British rule. Second, "it mirrored in a particularly acute form some of the principle opportunities and problems facing

18. For details, see Chapter I.
the nationalist movement in the country as a whole". The most obvious of the problems was that of 'communalism'. Third, my UP background not only helped in understanding the general mass feeling more clearly but also provided me an easy access to the primary sources at different places.

In UP, too, I have concentrated mainly on the urban areas. Contrary to the general belief, the Civil Disobedience Movement was not entirely a rural affair. The intensity of the Congress agitation was remarkable in the urban areas at least in the beginning of the first phase and it was only in October 1930 that the movement spread to the rural areas. While the second phase was no doubt started in the rural areas, it quickly moved to the urban areas and remained confined there till the end. Apart from this, Congress had made special efforts to mobilize the urban masses and some of its programmes were entirely urban-oriented.

Also, as the urban people are usually more aware of wider issues given their greater access to education, information, etc., than the rural ones, their participation in a particular movement carries a certain significance both from the movement as well as the government point of view. The inhabitants of urban areas usually reacted promptly to events in other parts of the country; thus giving the movement a more uniform all India character. In this context, the study of urban areas becomes obviously important, but I did not find even a simple study, not only of the Civil Disobedience Movement, but of the national
movement as a whole which concentrates particularly on urban areas. The recent works on the Civil Disobedience Movement concentrate mainly on rural areas. By studying the movement in the urban centres, therefore, I might contribute to a more balanced picture of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Concentration on a limited area is necessary to answer some of the specific questions with which this study is associated. So, for this purpose, I decided to concentrate on three cities viz., Allahabad, Benaras and Kanpur. Hence, some of the basic statistics of these cities become necessary. Despite having their distinct identities, these three cities represent the basic general character of the urban areas of UP.19 Along with four other cities (Agra, Barelly, Lucknow and Moradabad), they were classified by the census of 1931 as class I towns of the province.

In Kanpur, business and industry dominated the economic and political life of the city. We have seen earlier how its strategic location helped it to develop as a major industrial centre of north India. It became the fastest growing city in the province and also the most overcrowded. The municipality of Kanpur, the minus Cantonment, had nearly 220,000 residents in 1931 (150,000 of them Hindus and 65,000 Muslims)20 and a


20. This is around 30% of the total population. While in the whole Kanpur district, this percentage was only 11.
population density of around 25,000 per square mile compared with only 12,118 of Allahabad. Allahabad, besides being traditional and an important religious place was more famous for its bureaucratic nature. It was also the most important educational centre and a centre for the judiciary. Apart from this, it was the permanent headquarters of the AICC Secretariat. In 1931, it had a population of 173,895 which included 31.16% Muslims.21 The population of Benaras city which was a famous religious place and an important centre for handicraft industry was 201,037 and a population density of around 26,000. The percentage of Muslims in Benaras town was 13.75, while in the whole district, it was 11%.

Among these three cities, Allahabad with 25.5% literacy had the highest literacy rate. Here nearly 45% of the literates has also a working knowledge of English. In Benaras, 20.5% people were literates but only 29% of them had knowledge of English. While in Kanpur, only 16.31% of the total population of the city were literate and among them who had the added knowledge of English were 31.5%.22 Kanpur which had the least number of literate population in

21. The percentage of Muslims in the whole Allahabad District was around 14. The average literacy rate among the Muslims in the whole province was just around 5%. While among the Hindus, Kayasthas were the most literate with 47.5% literacy, followed by Brahmins with 17% literacy in 1931.

22. All these data are of towns only and not the whole district. The percentage of male literates in Allahabad district in 1931 was 10.2 and for female 1.7 only. In Kanpur district, it was 12.1 and 1.0, and in Benaras district, 16.4 and 2.2.
comparison to the other two, had the largest number of primary schools in the district. In 1932, there were 556 primary schools with a total enrolment of 32,680 students. In the same year, the number of secondary schools in the district were 29 which imparted education to 6,350 students. In Benaras district, the number of primary schools in 1932 were 435 which had a strength of 38,153 students and 36 secondary schools with around 9,000 students. In addition to these schools, Kanpur city had 13 intermediate colleges for boys and four for girls. In Allahabad city, the number of important high schools and intermediate colleges were 23. For education above intermediate level, Allahabad had its own university, started in 1887 - and a degree college each for boys and girls.23 Similarly, Benaras also had a university (BHU) opened in 1916 and an important degree college, i.e., Uday Pratap College, established in 1909. During the days of national education, Kashi Vidyapith was started in Benaras in 1921. In Kanpur, there was no University but it had three important degree colleges viz. Christchurch College (estb. in 1866), DAV College (1919) and USSD College (1921).

With this many schools and colleges and around a 20% literacy rate, these cities must have had significant number of people who were readers of newspapers and periodicals. Thus, we find in 1930, 90 newspapers and periodicals being published from Allahabad alone and 55

23. Ewing Christian College established in 1902 was for boys and Chrosthwait Girls College was for girls.
and 53 from Kanpur and Benaras respectively. In Allahabad, half of the total journals were published in Hindi, 27 were published in English and 12 in Urdu. From Benaras, 37 were published in Hindi and only 3 and 4 were of Urdu and English language. From Kanpur, 23 journals were published in Hindi, 20 in Urdu, and only 6 in English.24

Some of the newspapers and periodicals had considerable circulation figures but these figures do not give us the exact number of readership. Even today one newspaper is read by several people not only in libraries, but in private houses also. The libraries provide the facility of several journals and periodicals which helps spreading a particular idea very quickly in the society. In this period also we find several libraries in these towns. In Benaras, for example, there were six libraries in 1932 viz, Saraswati Bhavan established in 1791, Bang Sahitya Samaj Library (estb. in 1866), Carmichael Library (1872), Aryabhasha Pustakalaya, Nagri Pracharini Sabha (1894), Islamia Library (1920) and Mansa Devi Pustakalaya (1928). In the same year, Allahabad and Kanpur had 4 and 3 libraries respectively.25

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25. The Libraries of Allahabad were: Bharti Bhavan Library (1889), Public Library, Alfred Park (1863-64), Triveni Bhavan Pustakalaya and Ghanshyam Pustakalaya (1925); The Libraries of Kanpur were: Bang Sahitya Samaj (1898), Sharda Pustakalaya (1911) and Ganga Prasad Library and Reading Room (1924).
Clearly, the Indian National Congress occupies a central place in the following pages. The first three chapters revolve round the programmes and the activities of the Congress. The first and third chapters present a general trend of the movement during the first and the second 'active' phases (i.e., March 1930 to April 1931 and January 1932 to April 1934). The second chapter deals with the activities of the Congress and other organizations during the truce period, i.e., April 1931 to December 1931. The fourth chapter illustrates the process of mass mobilization. The different methods employed by the Congress and its affiliated organizations for mobilizing the urban masses are depicted in this chapter in detail. The fifth chapter contains the response of different classes and communities towards the movement and the different programmes and activities of the Congress.