GANDHI AND MASS MOBILIZATION - PART II
MUSLIMS, DALITS AND WOMEN

In the last chapter we discussed the Gandhian strategy in mobilizing different social classes. In the present chapter we discuss the mobilization of social groups like the Muslims, Dalits and Women.

A) GANDHI AND MUSLIMS:

Muslim presence, even though it was minimal, was there in the Congress from the initial days onwards. But it was Gandhi who tried to give primary importance to Hindu-Muslim unity in order to ensure a unified attack against the colonial power. It was his South African experience which made him conscious of the importance of Hindu-Muslim Unity. It was on the question of the Hindu Muslim unity that his non-violence put its severest test. When Gandhi came to India, he gave importance to this in almost all of his speeches. “Hindus and Muslims should become united; that is the desire I have expressed at every place”.\(^1\)

At the same time he was well aware of the fact that “This question cannot be solved finally. What happened in other countries will happen here.

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\(^1\) *CWMG*, Vol. 15, p.135
Hindus and Muslims will remain as two communities and this will do no harm to the country". So what he desired to make only a political alliance between these two communities.

The divisive tendencies among the Muslims were there from the initial stages itself which were reflecting in their reform movements and writings. The “psychology of Separatism” started from the days of Syed Ahmad Khan and it “ultimately led to the division of India in 1947”. They preferred British Raj rather than a democratic polity which, they believed, would result in Hindu domination. Both in education and employment they lagged behind Hindus. This created a sense of insecurity and frustration and which reached its zenith with the foundation of the Indian National Congress. But with the Turkish question and annulment of partition of Bengal Muslim estrangement with the Government started. Now Muslim organizations also started considering the British Government as their enemy instead of their protector. This change of attitude resulted in a Hindu-Muslim rapprochement. This resulted in the Congress-League Pact of 1916 by which Congress theoretically accepted separate electorate. Gandhi also received a very warm welcome from the

2 Ibid., p. 287
Muslim leaders when he came back to India. At the reception given to Gandhi in Madras by the Muslim League “a promise had been made to him and it was an unconditional promise to co-operate with him anything he might undertake on behalf of this country.”

Before making any political alliance with the Muslims he tried to settle some of the issues which always kept the Hindus and Muslims on logger heads such as Hindi-Urdu controversy and Cow-Protection.

Gandhi found it very important to allay Muslims also on the side of the Congress as it would be very difficult otherwise to fight against the British with a section of the Muslims supporting the British. And more than that to make Congress a true national organization representing every section of society and thereby challenge the British claim of safe-guarding the minorities. In order to get the Muslim mass support he tried his best to befriend them by involving himself in some of the issues which were great concern for them. “As a practical idealist he had realized that before he approached the question of Hindu-Muslim Unity in India he should closely study the thoughts, sentiments and aspirations of the Muslims and try to win their confidence”. Gandhi started making appeals to the

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4 *The Hindu*, 26-4-1915  
5 Abid Husain, *Gandhiji and Communal Unity*, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1969,
Government for the release of the Ali Brothers from their incarceration. He was also aware of the Muslim feeling towards the Turkish question.

When Gandhi started his political career in India, with the call for a nation-wide hartal against Rowlatt Act, “Muslims, who had been aggrieved over the Khilafat issue and its uncertain future, participated in the movement in large numbers”. Rowlatt Act gave Gandhi an opportunity to launch a movement against the government in an atmosphere when the Muslim population also was in a mood to fight against the Government. Gandhi made full use of the Muslim discontent over the British attitude towards the Khilafat and tried to make special appeal to the Muslim population. As expected Muslims participated in large numbers in Rowlatt Satyagraha and “hartal was complete in Muslim centers”. Even in those areas such as UP which was “notorious for communal strife” both Hindus and Muslims attended and addressed the meetings. A general feature of this movement was the unprecedented fraternization between the Hindus and the Muslims. “The Hindu-Muslim

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7 Abul Fazal, op. cit., p737

amity during this agitation was widespread and remarkable, surprising to
the government and even to the political leaders.9

The fear of the Muslims about the future of Islam and their
resentment at the Rowlatt Act10 was at its height when Gandhi launched
the Rowlatt Satyagraha. So when they found a reliable leader the Muslim
mass extended their support to Gandhi. “The beginning of 1919 witnessed
an infuriated Muslim mass and a position-loving leader entering into an
understanding.”11 But it also illustrated “Gandhi’s ability to draw
individuals belonging to different castes, communities, and religions into
a movement of protest against the British government”.12

Some of the great Muslim personalities such as M.A. Ansari, Ajmal
Khan, Hasrat Mohani, Asaf Ali, Abdul Rahman, Asif Hussain Hasni,
Shuaib Quershi, Abdul Bari, Faz-ul-Haq, Saiffudin Kitchlew etc. came to
the political limelight and were in close contact with Gandhi.

Participation of Muslims in great numbers in the Rowlatt
Satyagraha must have given Gandhi the confidence to take the issue of

9 Gail Minault, The Khilafat Movement, Religious Symbolism and Political
Mobilization in India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982, p.70
10 The Muslims considered Rowlatt Act as “weapon ready to meet the possible
Muslim discontent at the conclusion that will be arrived at by the Peace
Conference” - Abul Fazal, op. cit., p.735
11 Ibid., p.735
12 Introduction by R.Kumar, in R.Kumar, (ed.), Essays on Gandhian Politics- The
dismemberment of Khilafat and make it as a part of the Non-cooperation Movement. "Gandhi espoused the Khilafat cause because he saw it primarily as an anti-British issue, a means to bring the Muslims into the nationalist movement, and a big boost to his plans to reorganize and redirect the Congress into a mass movement."\textsuperscript{13} Khilafat issue was not all that relevant to the real interest of the country. It was Gandhi's "shrewd perception that it was an issue on which mass Muslim feeling could be aroused."\textsuperscript{14} And more than that the Muslim leaders who were in very good touch with Gandhi also found it favourable for them to make an alliance with Congress. By which once again they would get the opportunity to make the Congress accept them as the representatives of the Muslim community.

As Muslim leaders were interested in an immediate action they wanted Gandhi to launch a movement against Khilafat as early as possible. "Gandhi once again appeared on the scene with the announcement that he would lead the movement of Non-co-operation if the terms of peace with Turkey did not meet the sentiments of the

\textsuperscript{13} Gail Minnault, \textit{op. cit.}, p.11
Muslims in India.  

At first he didn't give a concrete shape of the movement to be launched. It was started only as a movement against the wrongs done to the Muslim community. The 19th of March was fixed as a day of National mourning, - a day of fasting and prayer and hartal.

Khilafat issue gave Gandhi an opportunity to forge unity between Hindus and Muslims and more than that it gave him an opportunity to mobilize the Muslims. Without considering the consequences of mobilizing Muslim on religious issue, Gandhi took up the case of Khilafat. "He did not profess to go into its merits. It was sufficient for him that the Muslim demand did not offend against any ethical principle and that it had a mass appeal for the Muslims".

It was decided to call for all India Khilafat day on Oct.17, 1919 as a mark of protest against the Peace Settlement. It was also decided to form the All India Khilafat Committee with Seth Chotani as the President and Shaukat Ali – in absentia – Secretary.

Gandhi was against the idea of calling for a boycott of British goods along with the Khilafat movement. When Gandhi was asked to

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16 Penderel Moon, *op. cit.*, p. 198
17 *The Bombay Chronicle*, Sept. 23, 1919
speak on the resolution for boycott of British goods at the Khilafat Conference held at Delhi on 23rd November, 1919, he very clearly stated that he was against the idea of Maulana Hasrat to call for boycott of British goods. According to Gandhi "there is a world of difference between withdrawal of co-operation and boycott. It was a man’s privilege to withhold co-operation when he likes, but we must have regard for the opinion of the world before adopting any political step". As the question of Punjab was not directly concerned with the Peace Celebrations he was against the idea of including it also as an issue for the non-participation of the peace celebrations. He was from the beginning itself not ready to discuss the issue of cow-protection and Punjab. Gandhi believed that if Hindus help the Muslims in Khilafat agitation then they may stop the slaughter of cows. As a reply to this Maulana Abdul Bari in his speech said "I say that, whether they help us in the Khilafat issue or not, we and they are of one land and, therefore, it behoves us to stop the slaughter of cows. As a Maulvi, I say that, in refraining from cow-slaughter of our own free will, we in no way go against our faith. Nothing else has created so real a spirit of brotherhood between us as the magnanimity shown by

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18 CWMG, Vol.19, p.137
19 CWMG, Vol.19 p. 140
20 CWMG, Vol.19, p. 140
21 CWMG Vol.19, pp. 150-51
the Hindus on the Khilafat issue".\textsuperscript{22} Gandhi said "Maulana Abdul Bari Sahib has shown us that this is a far simpler and easier way to ensure the protection of cows than to spend huge sums and quarrel with the Muslims for the purpose".\textsuperscript{23}

Even though the Muslim leaders accepted Gandhi's idea of Satyagraha they were also doubtful about the practicability of it. Hasrat Mohani told Gandhi in one of the Khilafat discussions on January 27, 1920 that "I cannot say whether Satyagraha can always be a practicable proposition but, for this purpose and in these times, I too believe that there is no other weapon like it. I shall therefore certainly propagate it".\textsuperscript{24} Gandhi had implicit faith on Ali Brothers and Hasrat Mohani. He remarked "the fate of the Khilafat case and the future peace of India depend largely on the wisdom of these three".\textsuperscript{25}

A "manifesto" on the Khilafat question was released from Sabarmati Ashram Ahmedabad, on March 7, 1920. As a first step it was decided to observe March 19$^{th}$ as the Khilafat Day, which would be observed as a day of national mourning, betokened by fasting and hartal.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{CWMG} Vol. 19, p. 154
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{CWMG}, Vol.19, p. 155
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{CWMG}, Vol.19, p. 357
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{CWMG}, Vol.19, p. 358
And it was declared that if the just demands of the Muslims were not granted they would resort to Non-co operation. When Gandhi was asked: Can Hindus accept all the resolutions?" Gandhi replied that "I speak only for myself. I will co-operate whole-heartedly with the Muslim friends in the prosecution of their just demands so long as they act with sufficient restraint and so long as I feel sure that they do not wish to resort to or countenance violence".26

Gandhi laid much stress on non-violence. He made it clear that "Even if there was a single murder by any of us or at our instance, I would leave".27 This from the initial stages itself created difference of opinion among Muslim leaders and Gandhi. They had no belief in non-violence as an ethical principle. They supported Gandhi only because they wanted his support and the mass influence he could command.28 Gandhi was aware of the fact that most of the Muslim leaders don’t have belief in non-cooperation. In one of his letter to Razmia Gandhi wrote on March 27, 1920 “My talk with Hazrat Mohani has left me much disturbed. According to him nobody believes in non-co-operation. But it has been

26 Young India, 10-3-1920
27 CWMG, Vol.20, p.318
28 Penderel Moon, op. cit., pp.99-100
taken up merely to conciliate me”.*29 For most of the Muslim leaders it was only an "opportunist alliance".*30

It was decided to start non-co-operation movement on 1st August, 1920 if the Khilafat question is not settled.*31 Later it was decided to add the Punjab wrongs also with the non-co-operation. According to Gail Minault Gandhi played up the Punjab atrocities “since his single-minded support of the Muslims’ Khilafat demands had found few echoes among his co-religionists.”*32

Some of the Hindu leaders of Congress especially Malyaviya were not in support of this and he appealed Gandhi publicly and privately to suspend non-co-operation till the Congress has pronounced upon it.*33 But Gandhi was not ready to suspend the movement. He said that “in my humble opinion it is no congressman’s duty to consult the Congress before taking an action in a matter in which he has no doubts....For me to suspend non-co-operation would be to prove untrue to the Mussalman brethren...The Mussalman must take action now they cannot await for the congress decision. They can only expect the Congress to ratify their action

*29 CWMG, Vol.20, p. 184  
*30 Penderel Moon, op. cit., p. 100  
*31 CWMG, Vol.21, p. 5  
*32 Gail Minault, op. cit., p. 99  
*33 Young India, 4-8-1920
and share their sorrows and their burden... The Khilafat is a matter of conscience with them. And in matters of conscience the Law of Majority has no place."  

Gail Minault considers Gandhi’s reply as a “convenient excuse”. Gandhi was aware that his Muslim allies were impatient over the pace of the movement. Gandhi was not in a position to hold off the movement.

Gandhi and Shaukat Ali started touring the country from north to south, proclaiming non-co-operation as the only remedy for Khilafat and Punjab wrongs. While the preparations were going on the Muslim religious leaders also started rallying their own forces. With the establishment of British power the position of ulama in the Muslim society started declining. Until then they got the greatest influence in regulating the religious life and they formed an important link between various Muslim groups. But they still remained as a politically unorganized group. When gave the call to organize the non-co-operation movement against the Khilafat wrong a major section of the ulama favoured accommodation with the congress.  

The religious leaders played an important role in politically mobilizing the rural Muslims with

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34 Young India, 4-8-1920
35 Gail Minault, op. cit., p.107
their personal influence as the religious leaders. A best example for this
was the Pirs of Sindh.37 Through the alliance with ulama the Khilafatists
opened a way to reach “the pious, still unpolticized Muslim masses”.38
As the support of the ulama were considered vital the western-educated
Muslims and Gandhi sought their support and ignored repeated warnings
about the obvious dangers of their involvement in politics.39

With the entry of the ulama in the movement the support of the
common Muslims were guaranteed. And with the inclusion of Punjab
grievances it was also made sure the support of the Congress. But the
movement was not without any shortcomings. Wherever Gandhi appealed
to the public he referred Swaraj as Ramraj and dharmraj and in his special
appeal to the women he asked them to act like Sita. This tended to create a
false feeling among the Muslims that Gandhi was advocating for Hindu
raj. “Although Gandhi’s idiom was very helpful in rousing the
overwhelming majority of Indian people, it would have been helpful if his
 allegories and parables could be mixed with those from Arabic and
Persian literature too.”40

37 Gail Minault, op. cit., p. 105
38 Gail Minault, Ibid., p. 110
39 Mushirul Hasan, op. cit., p. 31
40 Sailendra Nath Ghosh, ‘Communal Harmony: Why Gandhi failed and How His
The alliance with the ulama also proved disastrous to the movement as they were becoming increasingly impatient over Gandhi’s policy of moderation and some of them ever doubted the involvement of the Hindus in their religious issue and they even considered it as against the *Sharia*. As a final blow came Abdul Bari’s warning that the Muslims were ready to desert Gandhi and adopt violent methods. Moplah riots in August 1921 proved detrimental to the movement as some of the Hindu Congressmen felt discontent. “By the end of 1921 the Khilafat movement was slipping out of Gandhi’s control and his alliance with some of its influential leaders was under severe strain. The Moplah riots along the Malabar coast of south India was the last straw and decisively weakened what little enthusiasm Hindus had for the Khilafat cause.” The fear of violence and discontent among the Hindu Congress men hold back Gandhi from the adoption of civil disobedience. Gandhi was not ready to heed to the demand of the Ulema to adopt Civil Disobedience. Soon after the outbreak of violence in Chauri-Chaura Gandhi suspended the movement. This infuriated the Muslim religious leaders. Mushirul Hasan considers “the growing strains in his alliance with the Khilafatists, and his inability to control their activities” as one of the reasons which might have

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41 Mushirul Hasan, *op. cit.*, p.31
influenced Gandhi to suspend the movement. At the meetings of the Jamiyat-I-Ulama and the Central Khilafat Committee in March 1922, Gandhi was condemned for his betrayal.

Gandhi’s idea of mobilizing Muslims to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity through non-violent non-co-operation failed to keep the enthusiasm of the Muslim masses active for a long period. Nevertheless Khilafat proved to be a good opportunity to mobilize Muslim masses. With the end of it Muslim population started moving away from the Congress and National movement. One of the reason for its failure was that the Khilafat leaders accepted Gandhi’s ideal of Satyagraha as a political technique and Gandhi himself created tension by making non-violence as a pre-condition of his support for the movement. The criticism that religious issue used to mobilize the Muslim masses also not acceptable. As it was “difficult to imagine the spread of non-co-operation among the politically unsophisticated without the use of religious imagery. Though the success of the movement was limited at this stage, it did represent a pioneering

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43 Ibid., p. 33
44 Ibid., p. 34
45 Judith Brown, op. cit., p.210 and Mushirul Hasan, op. cit., p.32
effort in the diffusion of political awareness from urban to rural areas. As such, it was a remarkable breakthrough”.46

Gandhi succeeded in mobilizing the Muslim masses but failed to control them. Once these unorganized sections were drawn in to the political activities they created their own organization in which religious leaders became dominant. Gandhi’s relation to Muslims also underwent some changes as he lost the support of some of his Khilafat leaders. It was through these Muslim friends he got the support of the Muslims and alienation of these friends also resulted in the alienation of Muslims from him.

With the unhappy end the alliance that had been made with the Muslim religious leaders also came to an end. Muslims lost faith in Gandhi’s movement. Some of the closest allies of Gandhi during the Khilafat movement such as Abdul Bari, S.D.Kitchlew and Zafar Ali Khan turned to communal politics.47 Hindu Muslim issue became more acute than pre-1919. It was very much reflected in communal rioting. “During the years 1900 to 1922 there were 16 such riots; for the three years from

46 Gail Minault, op. cit., p.132
47 B.R.Nanda, op. cit., p. 388-89
1923 to 1926 the number was 72”.48 The Muslim League held its annual session separately in 1924 for the first time since 1918.49

When Gandhi came out of prison he found himself in a very embarrassing position. There was a growing distrust between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims started considering Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Shraddhanandji etc as their enemies. But Gandhi was keeping a very good relation with these leaders and moreover he in one of his article in Young India wrote that they were not anti-Muslims or enemies of Muslim community.50 This infuriated many Muslim. They started reacting to it. One Mussalman in his letter to Gandhi wrote that “No wise man, Hindu or Mussalman, will accept your judgement that Pandit Malaviyaji is ‘no enemy of Mussalmans’...Lala Lajpat Rai stands in the same category with Pandit Malaviyaji...Let me assume that you will not advance the Hindu-Muslim problems by all inch by praising these Hindu leaders and condemning the Muslim leaders”.51 Gandhi’s relation with these leaders often created suspicion among a section of the Muslims. Apart from this, there were several instances in which Gandhi’s

49 Judith Brown, Gandhi - Prisoner of Hope, Oxford University Press, Delhi,1990, p.185
50 Young India, 29-5-1924
51 CWMG, Vol.28, p.145, Young India, 12-6-1924
statements were often mis-reported. For example, The Hindu (12th June, 1924) reported of having said ‘every Mussalman as a vagabond.’

In order to win the confidence of Muslims, Gandhi wanted Congress to elect Ansari as the President of the Congress. And at the same time he confessed that he would give his vote to Sarojini Naidu.

The communal riot at Kohat deeply hurt Gandhi. He decided to observe a 21 days fast from 18th September 1924 onwards at the house of Maulana Mohammed Ali as a penance for the sins of Hindus and Muslims. He made it clear that “The fast is not born out of ill-will against any such interpretation. It is in the fitness of things that this fast should be taken up and completed in a Mussalman house”. Even though the emotional impact of the fast was great practically it solved nothing.

In between, some of the statements made by Gandhi, which is related to Koran, created doubt among Muslims about his intention. Gandhi reacted to the punishment of Stoning to Death when he got the report about this punishment inflicted upon two members of the Ahmediya Sect. He said: “…as a human being living in the fear of God I

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52 Young India, 26-6-1924, CWMG, Vol. 28, p. 215-16
53 Young India, 17-7-1924
54 CWMG, Vol.29, p.180
55 Young India, 25-9-1924, CWMG, Vol.29, p.212
56 Judith Brown, Gandhi - Prisoner..., p.188
should question the morality of the method under any circumstance what so ever. What ever may have been necessary or permissible during the Prophet’s lifetime and in that age, this particular form of penalty cannot be defended on the mere ground of its mention in the Koran. Every formula of every religion has in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent. Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world".  

57 Muslim leaders reacted sharply to Gandhi’s statement. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, the President of the Punjab Khilafat Committee wrote to Gandhi “...by challenging the right of the Koran to regulate the life of its followers in its own way you have shaken the belief of millions of your Muslim admirers in your capacity to lead them...to hold that even if the Koran supported such form of penalty, it should be condemned outright as an error, is a form of reasoning which cannot appeal to the Mussalmans”.

58 Gandhi replied Maulana that “The Maulana has betrayed intolerance of criticism by a non-Muslim of anything relating to Islam”.

59 Mahomed Ali, President, Ahmadiya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islam wrote to Gandhi “The Koran enjoins no such punishment as stoning for any

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57 Young India, 26-2-1925
58 Young India, 5-3-1925
59 CWMG, Vol. 30, p. 337
offence whatever. Your note is unfair to Islam and her prophet and liable
to tremendously prejudice the world against Islam”\textsuperscript{60}

Gandhi became aware of the fact that it was difficult to find a solution for the Hindu-Muslim problem. In one of his speech at Public meeting, Madras on March 7, 1925, he said: “It has become a hopeless tangle at the present moment.....for the time being I have put away in my cupboard this Hindu-Muslim tangle. But I must confess to you today that I cannot present a workable solution you will accept.”\textsuperscript{61} Later in a speech at Karadi on April 15, 1925, Gandhi remarked that “If I sit down to sum up [the position] in India, Muslims are more to be blamed than Hindus....I cannot disown Muslims even if they harass Hindus for no fault of their’s. I shall try to please them. I shall go on telling them that what they are doing is \textit{adharma} and not Islam...There is none today listen to this advice of mine.”\textsuperscript{62}

Gandhi’s changed position on Hindu-Muslim tangle was very clear when he said that: “I gave all the help that I could for the Khilafat, because I want to enlist the Mussalman’s sympathy in the matter of cow-

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Young India}, 12-3-1925
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{The Hindu}, 9-3-1925
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{CWMG}, Vol.31, pp. 160-161
protection". He claimed that "Let no one imagine that the differences between Maulana Shaukat Ali and myself about Kohat have put any strain what so ever upon our relations," his relation with Ali Brothers also undergone drastic change. Ali Brothers also stopped accompanying Gandhi. Later Gandhi accepted that "...I know that I have not the Ali Brothers with me. Maulana Shaukat Ali will no longer have me in his pocket." Whatever unity he had forged with the Muslim leaders during the Khilafat came to an end by the end of 1925.

Publication of Nehru Report made this very clear. It led to a definite cleavage between Hindus and Muslims.

The difference of opinion started coming out during the All-Parties Conference at Bombay in May 1928. To overcome the deadlock Gandhi had suggested the formation of a committee to draft the constitution. There was difference of opinion regarding the members of the committee also. Four names suggested were Ansari, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Aney. Sarojini Naidu and Shaukat Ali proposed Shauib's name. Gandhi accepted their suggestion and included Subhas

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63 Ibid., p. 213
64 Young India, 28-5-1925
65 Jayakar Papers, F.No.354 (press clippings), NAI, p. 117
66 The Indian Daily Mail, April 25, 1930, p.119
Bose also. Shaukat Ali wanted Shuaib in the committee to represent the Muslim demand of reservation of seats because the other members Ansari, Motilal, Jawaharlal and Aney did not want Muslim reservation of seats. But to Shaukat's surprise, at the open meeting of the All-Parties Conference, other names were also added to the committee, i.e., Ali Imam, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jayakar, Joshi, and Sardar Mangal Singh. Shaukat Ali believed that Shuaib alone and possible Subhas Bose were the only members who could put forward the Muslim point of view, and the views of others were against the reservation of seats.\textsuperscript{67} Shaukat Ali made it clear that "My quarrel really is not with Ansari but with Pandit Motilal, who knowing that I was giving expression to the views of millions of Mussalmans yet would not listen..."\textsuperscript{68}

Gandhi was not ready to agree with the Muslim claim that the Nehru Report has disregarded Mussalman interest. In one of his letter to a Mussalman he wrote that "...I am convinced that there has been no desire on the part of the framers of that Report to belittle or ignore the Mussalman claim."\textsuperscript{69}

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\textsuperscript{67} Extracts from Shaukat Ali's letter to Gandhi, dated October 23,1928, S.N. No. 13710, NAI and \textit{CWMG}, Vol.43, pp.524-526.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid}, p.526
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{CWMG}, Vol.45, pp.54-55
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Gandhi made it clear after his meeting with Jinnah in Delhi “although changes may be made in it, with the approval of the people when the time comes, for the present and for this year this Report should, from the people’s point of view, be considered a final and definite demand and wherever it is accepted it should be done unconditionally.”

There was much pressure on Gandhi from some of the Hindu leaders not to alter the Nehru Report and Jayakar warned him “that any attempt at this time to vary the solution of the Hindu-Muslim question adopted in the Nehru Committee Report is fraught with far reaching consequences”. He told Gandhi that Mohammedans were divided into four well known groups. Three of them were against joint electorates at any price. It was therefore not clear on whose behalf Jinnah spoke and what bulk of the entire Mohammedan community would be placated if his demands were conceded.

In March 1929 Muslims in the Legislative Assembly made it clear that they did not accept the Nehru Report. Jinnah drafted a fourteen point resolution to unite the various blocs of Muslim politicians. But he failed in this task.

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70 Ibid, p.108
71 Jayakar Papers, F.No.407, part I, NAI
72 Ibid.
Whatever hope was left in making the Muslim leaders to accept the Report was came to an end with the stand taken by some of the Hindu leaders. Ansari in complete despair wrote to Gandhi “Pt. Motilal’s cold reception to Mr. Jinnah, whom I had succeeded after a great deal of effort in persuading to come and see Panditji at his house, was also a great disappointment. After that the communalist Mussalmans got the chance and the Muslim attitude hardened [as] shown by the absurd resolution at the All India Parties’ Muslim Conference at Delhi and subsequently by fourteen points of Mr. Jinnah.”

Although Jinnah’s 14 points failed in uniting various blocs of Muslim Politicians “...its similarity to the resolutions of the All Parties Muslim Conference in Delhi in January showed the trend of Muslim political opinion away from agreement with congress”. The All Parties Muslim Conference under the presidency of Aga Khan continued its existence and represented the Muslim demands in the subsequent months demonstrated the split with the Congress and a new unity among Muslim politicians was in marked contrast to their disunity during the 1920s.

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74 An ad-hoc body which emerged in reaction to Nehru Report.
75 Letter to Gandhi from Dr. M.A. Ansari dated 13/12/1930, CWMG, Vol. 48, p.525
76 Judith Brown, Gandhi and Civil..., p.47
77 Ibid.
The launching of Civil Disobedience by Gandhi had aggravated the situation. Ansari warned Gandhi "You are taking a great responsibility on yourself by declaring war against the Government today. The situation today is quite the reverse of what it was in 1920, when you started the campaign of non-co-operation." In the comparative table prepared by Ansari it was showed that 'in 1920 – Highest watermark reached in Hindu-Muslim unity and in 1930 – Lowest water-mark reached in Hindu-Muslim unity.'

In the meanwhile, there started numerous misrepresentations about Gandhi in the Muslim Press. It was spread that Gandhi prevented Imam Saheb, an inmate of the Ashram in joining the Ashram group of civil resisters. Gandhi made it clear that "Imam is not joining the march as he is too weak to undertake the exertion" and that "two Mussalmans are actually enlisted for the march" and "the present plan of campaign is so designed as ultimately to dispel all suspicion". It was reported that Maulana Shaukat Ali remarked that the independence movement is for Hinduraj and against Mussalmans and therefore the Musselman should

78 Letter from M.A. Ansari to Gandhi dated February 13, 1930, CWMG, vol.48, p.526
79 Ibid., p.527
80 Young India, dated 12-3-1930
leave it alone. As a reaction to Muslim friends complaint that he did not pass through their villages Gandhi decided to commence the Satyagraha from a Muslim friend's house in Dandi.

Muslims generally kept themselves aloof from the march. They feared that "if the principles of Nehru Report are to be adopted in framing the future constitution of India its interests would be adversely affected. Whether this fear is justifiable or not the fact remains that it is there." They also believed that Gandhi will call off the campaign if Britain agrees to accept the Nehru Report and grant Dominion Status. Gandhi himself said that "The fact that those taking part in the movement are preponderatingly Hindus is unfortunately true. By proclaiming a boycott the Maulana is helping the process."

According to Judith Brown, "In contrast to non-co-operation Muslim participation was paltry, except on the Frontier,.....In Muslim majority areas such as Bengal and Punjab civil disobedience was much

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81 Ibid.
82 The Bombay Chronicle, 26-3-1930
83 Jayakar Papers, F. No. 354, Press Clippings, The Indian Daily Mail, dated April 25, 1930, NAI.
84 Ibid.
85 Young India, 12-3-1930
weakened by Muslim abstention and in all just over 1,000 Muslims in gaol in mid-November, out of a total of 29,000 prisoners.86

But still Gandhi was optimistic of bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity. While delivering a speech at Council of All-India Muslim League, Delhi, he expressed his fear that “Today you may not accept that position of mine but my early upbringing, my childhood and youth, has been to strive for Hindu-Muslim unity. No one may dismiss it today as merely a craze of my old age” and he assured them that if congress participate in the Round Table Conference and “if there is a settlement between the Government and the congress, the question of Hindu-Muslim unity will be one which will engage our first attention.”87

Gandhi wanted to reach an agreement with the Mussalmans before going to attend the Round Table Conference so that he could represent a truly national party. He said that “without that unity our going to the Conference will be of no avail. No one will pretend that the conference can help us to achieve unity”.88 He even told Hindus to make voluntary surrender. But he had to go to London without a communal settlement. His hands were tied by the views of congress’s own small group of

86 Judith Brown, *Gandhi – Prisoner…*, pp.242-43
87 The Hindustan Times, dated 25-2-1931
88 Young India, dated 12-3-1931
Muslim supporters; in the end his attempts to achieve a new unity collapsed on the question of separate electorate.89

In his speech at Federal Structure Committee on September 15, 1931, he gave account of the functioning of the Congress and about the leaders who presided the annual sessions through which he tried to show the representative character of the Congress. At the beginning of the speech itself he accepted his limitation. "I am obliged to make these remarks because I know that there are fundamental differences of opinion between the Government and the Congress, and it is possible that there are vital differences between my colleagues and myself."90

Gandhi tried a lot to include Ansari also a part of Congress delegation to Round Table Conference. But his conversations with the Muslim Delegation in London failed. In his press statement he said: "I have felt the absence of Ansari a severe handicap, but he will be of no real use unless The Muslim Delegation desires or approves of his selection as a delegate".91 Gandhi was convinced that unity was impossible. He accepted that he was not the leader of a united India.92

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89 Judith Brown, *Gandhi-Prisoner...,* p.254
90 *CWG*, Vol. 53, p.359
92 *Young India* dated 5-11-1931, *CWG* Vol.54, p.67
opinion among the Indian delegates gave Britishers an opportunity to award separate constituencies to all the minorities.

Second Round Table Conference made it clear that unity was not possible at all. Muslim opinion could never be in agreement with the Congress.

In subsequent years many Muslims began to reorganize under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. League became more powerful under his leadership. The League rejected the Government of India Act, 1935. When Congress Governments formed after the 1937 elections, League under Jinnah started intensive political activity against the Congress. They started accusing Congress for being hostile to the Muslim interests and of favouring Hindus. Jinnah, in his speech, on October 15, 1937 at Lucknow said: "The present leadership of Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Muslims of India more and more by pursuing the policy, which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed the government in six provinces where they are in a majority they have by their words, deeds and programme
shown more and more that the Muussalmans cannot expect any justice or fairplay at their hands."\(^93\)

The Calcutta session of the Muslim League passed a resolution on the communal riots which had taken place in U.P., Bihar, C.P, Bombay and other provinces: "In the opinion of the League the Congress governments have signally failed to discharge their primary duty of protecting the Muslim minorities in their provinces and it declares that if immediate steps are not taken to protect the Muslims by the Congress governments the consequences to the country as a whole will be disastrous."\(^94\)

The Congress Muslim mass contact programme really annoyed the Muslim League leaders especially Jinnah. He remarked: "The Congress attempt under the guise of establishing mass contact with the Mussalmans is calculated to divide and weaken and break the Mussalmans and is an effort to detach them from their accredited leaders."\(^95\)

Jinnah made his position clear when he declared in his speech at Lucknow that "it is no having complete independence on your lips and the

\(^{93}\) *A.I.C.C. Files No. B. 6 to 10 / 1938*, NMML.

\(^{94}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{95}\) *CWMG* Vol.72 p.493
Government of India Act, 1935 in your hands”. As a reply to Jinnah’s speech Gandhi wrote a letter to Jinnah on October 19, 1937 “....the whole of your speech is a declaration of war. Only I had hoped you would reserve poor me as bridge between the two. I see that you want no bridge.” Jinnah replied that “I am sorry you think my speech at Lucknow is a declaration of war. It is purely in self defence....As to reserving you as a “bridge” and peace-maker”, don’t you think your complete silence for all these months has identified you with the Congress leadership although I know that you are not even a four-anna member of that body?”

Gandhi’s changed attitude during late 1930s irritated Jinnah very much. When Jinnah expressed his desire to have a talk with Gandhi before his discussion with the Congress President. Gandhi told Jinnah that “so far as I am concerned, just as on the Hindu-Muslim question I was guided by Dr. Ansari, now that he is no more in our midst, I have accepted Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as my guide. My suggestion, therefore, to you is that conversation should be opened in the first instance as between you and Maulana Saheb. But in every case regard me as at

96 The Indian Annual Register, 1937 Vol.11, pp.403-5. CWMG, Vol.72, p.492
97 CWMG Vol.72, p.353
98 The Hindustan Times, 16-6-1938. CWMG Vol.72, p.494
This really annoyed Jinnah. He expressed his dissatisfaction in his reply to Gandhi on March 3, 1938, "... I find that there is no change in your attitude and mentality when you say you would be guided Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as Dr. Ansari is no more. If you pursue this line you will be repeating the same tragedy as you did when you expressed your helplessness because Dr. Ansari, holding pronounced and die-hard views, did not agree and you had to say that although you were willing, but what could you do? This happened, as you know, before you went to the Round Table Conference". He asked Gandhi to recognize the All-India Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organization of the Mussalmans of India. He said that, "It is only on that basis that we can proceed further and devise machinery of approach."

Gandhi expressed his helplessness in his reply dated on March 8, 1938, "You expect me to be able to speak on behalf of 'the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country.' I am afraid I cannot fulfill the test. I cannot represent either the Congress or the Hindus in the sense you mean. But I would exert to the utmost all the moral influence I could have with them in order to secure an honourable settlement." Gandhi was ready to go to Bombay to meet Jinnah and Jinnah agreed to meet him in

99 CWMG, Vol.73, p.5. The Bombay Chronicle, 16-6-1938
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., p.454
Bombay. But Jinnah declined the suggestion made by Gandhi of Maulana Azad accompanying him and made it clear that he would prefer to see him alone.

The Muslim mass contact programme or talks with Jinnah could not solve the problem. Congress almost lost the support of the Muslim masses by 1940. Gandhi in his speech at Subjects Committee on March 18, 1940 said that: “There was a time when there was not a Muslim whose confidence I did not enjoy. Today I have forfeited that confidence and most of the Urdu Press pours abuse on me.”

Muslims were not at all enthusiastic when Gandhi gave the call for Quit India Movement. The complete alienation of Muslims reflected in this movement. It was partly because of the Muslim League’s prohibition on taking any part in the movement. The Muslims as a community, kept completely aloof from the disturbances and were, in fact, actively helpful to the authorities in some areas. And because of this “no communal clashes took place.”

102 Ibid., p. 14
103 Ibid., p. 106
104 CWMG, Vol.78, p.73, Harijan, 30-3-1940
105 Home Political, (I) F. No. 3/34/42, NAI.
106 Ibid.
Government of Bihar reported that “Muhammadans in the lump held aloof from the disturbances, though this was not by any means universal. Educated Muslims generally did not participate and the influence of the Muslim League probably governed their attitude. But in some areas the lower classes of Muhammadans certainly did participate and both in Patna and Bhagalpur districts Muhammadan goondas were prominent in several places. In Tirhut on the other hand there were fairly numerous cases of Muhammadans co operation with the authorities.”

Muslim League intensified its anti-Congress propaganda after 1939. The Lahore session of the All India Muslim League in 1940 declared its demand for Pakistan. In 1942 Cripps Mission accepted the autonomy of Muslim majority provinces.

In subsequent years Muslim League intensified its propaganda for Pakistan and was never ready to go back from it. It had become very clear during Gandhi-Jinnah talks in 1944. Even though Jinnah expressed his dislike ness over Gandhi’s argument that he had come to meet Jinnah in his individual capacity and not as a representative of Congress he agreed to discuss the Hindu-Muslim question with Gandhi. But Jinnah

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107 Ibid.
made it clear that he wanted Pakistan before independence but Gandhi was not ready to agree with that.\textsuperscript{110}

There were difference of opinion between them on every issues they discussed. When Jinnah asked Gandhi "...does it (independence) mean on the basis of a United India?"\textsuperscript{111} Gandhi replied that "Independence does mean as envisaged in the A.I.C.C. Resolution of 1942. But it cannot be on the basis of a united India. If we come to a settlement, it would be on the basis of the settlement, assuming of course, that it accrues general acceptance in the country. The process will be somewhat like this. We reach by joint effort independence for India as it stands. India becoming free will proceed to demarcation, plebiscite and partition if the people concerned vote for partition. All this is implied in the Rajaji Formula."\textsuperscript{112}

Jinnah wanted Gandhi to accept that he represented Hindu India and told him that "...when you proceed to say that you aspire to represent all the inhabitants of India, I regret I cannot accept that statement of yours. It is quite clear that you represent nobody else but the Hindus and

\textsuperscript{110} CWMG vol. p.370
\textsuperscript{111} Letter from M.A. Jinnah to Gandhi dated September 14,1944, CWMG, Vol.84, p.465
\textsuperscript{112} Letter to M.A. Jinnah dated September 15,1944, Ibid, p.384
as long as you do not realize your true position and the realities, it is very difficult for me to argue with you..."\(^{113}\)

Gandhi accepting the self-determination of Muslim majority provinces and asked Jinnah "Can we not agree to differ on the question of "two nation" and yet solve the problem on the basis of self-determination? It is this basis that has brought me to you. If the regions holding Muslim majorities have to be separated according to the Lahore Resolution, the grave step of separation should be specifically placed before and approved by the people in that area."\(^{114}\) Jinnah replied him that "Ours is a case of division and carving out two independent sovereign States by way of settlement between two major nations, Hindus and Muslims, and not of severance or secession from any existing union, which is non-existent in India. The right of self-determination which we claim postulates that we are a nation, and as such it would be the self-determination of the Mussalmans, and they alone are entitled to exercise that right."\(^{115}\)

A break was expected form initial stages of Gandhi-Jinnah talks. As expected they failed in reaching a mutual settlement. Gandhi made it clear

\(^{113}\) Letter from M.A. Jinnah to Gandhi dated September 17, 1944, \textit{Ibid}, p.469
\(^{114}\) Letter to M.A. Jinnah dated September 19,1944,\textit{Ibid}, p.471
\(^{115}\) Letter from M.A. Jinnah dated September 21, 1944, \textit{Ibid}, p.471
that "I cannot accept the Lahore Resolution as you want me to..."\textsuperscript{116} Jinnah also wrote to Gandhi that "if a break comes, it will be because you have not satisfied me in regard to the essence of the claim embodied in the Lahore Resolution".\textsuperscript{117} And in his statement said that "I regret to say that I have failed in my task of converting Mr. Gandhi".\textsuperscript{118} With the break up of Gandhi – Jinnah Talks of 1944 the final attempt to solve the Hindu-Muslin problem got a set back.

By 1945 Gandhi started moving away from Congress when he felt that his words carry not much weight among his colleagues. By the time the popular support for Pakistan also got momentum. It really reflected in the 1946 elections. In contrast to 1937 election Muslim League got 439 out of 494 Muslim seats in the Legislatures, and had large majorities in Bengal and Punjab, the Muslim majority areas where previously it had been so weak. And not it could legitimately claim to represent India’s Muslims.\textsuperscript{119} By the end of 1946 Congress accepted the grouping of provinces as envisaged in the Cabinet Mission Plan.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{116} Letter to Jinnah September 26, 1944, \textit{Ibid.}, p.413\textsuperscript{117} Letter from M.A. Jinnah dated September 26, 1944, \textit{Ibid.}, p.477\textsuperscript{118} M.A. Jinnah’s Statement, \textit{Ibid.}, p.478\textsuperscript{119} Judith Brown, \textit{Gandhi-Prisoner...}, p.365\textsuperscript{120} Bipan Chandra and et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p.501
After the 1946 election Viceroy invited Congress to from the interim government. Later Muslim League also joined the interim government. But they declined to join the Constituent Assembly. When the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee declared the decision to transfer of power to Indians before June 1948 Muslim League tried to disrupt the Congress ministries and intensified its struggle to achieve Pakistan. More over Jinnah’s call to observe August 16, 1946 as Direct Action Day “unleashed communal violence and a train of retaliation which even a joint appeal for peace by Gandhi and Jinnah in April 1947 could not control.”  

Communal violence and Lord Mountbatten’s talks with the leaders of Congress and League made it clear that partition of India was inevitable.

Gandhi’s disillusionment over the decisions of Congress and his helplessness became very clear when he said that “whatever the Congress decides will be done; nothing will be according to what I say. Mr writ runs no more. If it did the tragedies in the Punjab, Bihar land Noakhali would have happened. No one listen to me any more. I am a small man. True there was a time when mine was a big voice. Then everyone obeyed what I said; now neither the Congress nor the Hindus nor the Muslims

\[121\] Judith Brown, *Gandhi – Prisoner...*, p.374
listen to me. Where is the Congress today? It is disintegrating. I am crying in the wilderness.\footnote{122}

In June 1947 Congress accepted partition of India.\footnote{123} Gandhi said that though he did not agree with the decisions of the Working Committee regarding the division of India, he did not want to take any step which would stand in the way of the Working Committee in implementing its decision.\footnote{124}

Thus all his attempts to find a solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem and befriending Muslims came to a tragic end with the Partition and the communal violence erupted before and after the partition.

Gandhi tried to mobilize Muslims through some of his dearest Muslim friends. He depended on different persons at various stages. He was completely successful in mobilizing them in the first stage with the help of Ali Brothers. But things began to change with the withdrawal of the Non-Co-operation - Khilafat Movement and with the alienation of Ali Brothers. When Ali Brothers started moving away from him he depended on Dr. M.A. Ansari to keep a good understanding with the Muslims. But

\footnote{122} Speech at Prayer Meeting, April 1, 1947, \textit{CWMG}, Vol.94, pp. 216-217
\footnote{123} Jawaharlal Nehru’s Letter to Viceroy dated June 2, 1947, \textit{CWMG}, Vol.95, p.416
\footnote{124} Speech at Congress Working Committee Meeting, June 2, 1947, \textit{CWMG}, Vol. 95, p.192
due to the indifferent stand taken by some of his colleagues especially Hindu nationalists spoiled the attempts made by Ansari and Gandhi to keep them under their leadership. Ansari did not enjoy much support among the Muslim League leaders. With the death of Ansari he turned towards Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. But “Azad was hardly of the all-India standing to perform this function, as an educated Bengali without a regional base or a solid organizational backing in his community.”

The success of Gandhi’s mobilization of Muslims depended much more on the issues he had chosen. Khilafat issue was one such which gave him a direct link to Muslim problem. But after that there was not any such issue which could draw Muslims to the forefront. Muslim participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was not prominent and it was much more less in the Quit India Movement.

With the entrance of Jinnah as the leader of Muslim League in the second half of 1930 made it almost impossible for Congress leadership to win over the support of the Muslims for the national cause. The poor performance of the Muslim League candidates in the 1937 election really alarmed Jinnah and it became almost impossible to conciliate him. Moreover the policy of the British Government also helped him. “At

every critical moment after the resignation of ministries in September, 1939, Jinnah’s great asset was the government’s readiness to negotiate with him as an ally rather than as an adversary. The Quit India movement (August 1942) turned out to be yet another milestone. The British government looking for an ally during the war years never wanted to irritate Jinnah. This placed Jinnah in favourable position.

Gandhi also found it very difficult to negotiate with Jinnah, who was not ready to make any adjustments. And there was not a single Muslim leader in Congress who could draw the support of large number of Muslims for the national cause. Gandhi with the lack of support from his own colleagues in the Congress and the absence of a strong Muslim leader whom he can depend to have a good relation with the Muslim masses failed in keeping the Muslims under his leadership.

B) GANDHI AND DALITS:

Harijan upliftment movement was an important part in the constructive programme. Even though Gandhi treated it in a religious

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127 Some of the readers of Navajivan suggested Gandhi to use the word Harijan as a substitute for the word Antyaja (last born). The word Harijana was first used by a Gujarati poet which means ‘men of god’ who are abandoned by society.
manner it widened the mass base of the movement. It was started to eradicate the evil of untouchability but it in an indirect way helped the national movement. Most of the movements which started and confined locally provided an atmosphere which was conducive for the ongoing national movement. It helped to mobilize the masses who were till then kept aloof from the political activities. Later it helped in generating a spirit among these untouchables to organize themselves.

The old Indian social organization was based on the Varnas. Religious, economic, political and social life of the individual was determined by the Varna in which he was born. His or her rights and duties were determined by the very birth in a particular Varna. This system put the Brahman at the top and the Shudras at the lowest strata of the social organization.

There is a clear difference between the *Varna* and the caste. Varna refers to the ‘colour’ and consequently to the duties assigned to the persons born in their respective *Varnas*. Caste refers to profession which a person adopts. Thus there may be many professions in the same *Varna*. In the beginning, persons adopted different professions on the basis of their own choice-physical fitness and mental aptitude-but for long it remained confined to their own *Varnas*. 
Gandhi firmly believed in the *Varnadharma* and never doubted its utility. "For me *Varnashrama* does not mean a graded system of untouchability.............. it does not mean to me grades at all. It is not a vertical division. It is a horizontal one. In my view, all Varnas stand absolutely on the same plane, i.e., of equality. Hence there can be no question of untouchability. *Varnadharma* is a mighty economic law which, if we subscribe to it, would save us from the catastrophe that is in store for the world. I have sufficient warrant in Hindu scriptures for saying the Brahmins and scavengers are absolutely on a par in the eyes of God."\(^{128}\)

In India, even during the modern period also, caste system played a very important role in the social set up. The caste-Hindus had certain privileges which were denied to the lower castes of the society. Later on a fifth group named "*Namasudras*" were added to the already existing division. They were even lower in social scale than the *sudras*. They were also called "*Panchamas*" or pariahs. As these people were very much lower than even the *sudra*, they were called untouchables. They were required to do the "unclean" work, such as sweeping, scavenging. In some parts of South India, even the shadow of those untouchables was regarded

\(^{128}\) *CWMG*, vol. 62, pp. 294-295
as pollution.\textsuperscript{129} In rural as well as in urban areas also the conditions of the untouchables were same. The rural population who went to the urban areas absorbed almost entirely in ill-paid, menial service jobs or in work connected with handling leather, in keeping with their traditional ‘low’ or ‘impure’ occupations, and alternative avenues of employment for them were virtually non-existent. The untouchables also had a very little opportunity to enter educational institutions, both because they were unable to afford the expense and because these institutions were usually unwilling to accept untouchable students. Being mostly illiterate, they were seldom employed in the lower government services in clerical posts. Before 1934, they were not recruited to the subordinate ranks of the police force.\textsuperscript{130}

Occupational divisions along caste lines, prevalent in the rural situation, were thus being replicated in urban area, notwithstanding the direct cast-domination in employment relations. Occupational distinctions

\textsuperscript{129} The disabilities which the Depressed Classes suffered with regard to the use of amenities such as wells, roads and temples or status symbols such as dress and ornaments were generally more severe in Madras Presidency than elsewhere. Andre Beteille, ‘Caste and Political Group Formation in Tamilnad’ in Rajani Kothari (ed.) \textit{Caste in Indian Politics}, Orient Longman Limited, New Delhi, 1970, p.285. In Malabar there were not only untouchable castes, there were ‘unseeable’ ones as well. Dilip M. Menon, \textit{Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India – Malabar, 1900–1948}, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.2.

were coupled with spatial segregation of the untouchables in terms of residential settlement patterns. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, therefore, the untouchable migrants to the towns were exposed to two contrary trends. On the one hand, caste-domination ceased, to a large extent, to be a feature of occupational relations. It would be reasonable to surmise that this was also likely to have created expectations and aspirations for economic advancement, improved living conditions, and education. On the other hand, continued caste-distinctions in employment or educational opportunities and settlement patterns, as well as their general poverty, thwarted economic or social improvement among untouchables.\textsuperscript{131}

Untouchability is a notion of defilement, contempt and hatred towards a section of people called untouchables. It was, however, imposed on them by all cunning and coercion. It survived because it formed part of practices of Hinduism. As a mental attitude it was manifested through several acts which include (i) prevention from entering any place of public worship; (ii) enforcement of disability with regard to access to watering place, public charitable institutions, public conveyance and such other places; (iii) restriction to use of jewellery and

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., pp. 280-281
finery; (iv) refusal to admit to hospitals, educational institutions and public employment; (v) discriminations to the prejudice of untouchables at public and private places and institutions; (vi) compulsion to perform menial and low status services such as scavenging, etc; and (vii) boycott or perpetration of atrocities on the untouchables as a reprisal or revenge for having attempted to exercise their legitimate rights.¹³²

Untouchability is considered as an integral part of Hindu religion which had the sanction of Hindu traditions. 'According to Hindu religion as traditionally practiced, communities such as Dhed, Bhangi etc., known by the names of Antyaj, Pancham and Achhut and so on, are looked upon as untouchable. Hindus belonging to other communities believe that they will be defiled if they touch a member of any of the said communities and, if anyone does so accidentally, he thinks that has committed a sin.'¹³³

Gandhi gave equal importance to the constructive programme along with the national movement.¹³⁴ Constructive work played an important

¹³³ CWMG, Vol.14, p.456
¹³⁴ A strategist of Swaraj as Gandhi was, he had “evolved and kept before the Congress and the nation a double programme, one for active and revolutionary periods when the tempo of political life is on the rise, and the other for comparatively peaceful times when the national life is sluggish and normal” J.B. Kripalani quoted in K.C. Mahendru, Gandhi and the Congress Socialist Party – 1934-48, ABS Publications, Jalandhar, 1986, p.107. Constructive Programme was also Gandhi’s'
role in the Gandhian strategy. It was primarily organized around the promotion of Khadi, spinning, and village industries, national education and Hindu-Muslim unity, struggle against untouchability and social uplift of the Dalits, and boycott of foreign cloth and liquor. Removal of untouchability was predominant among his constructive programme. It was during his childhood days itself that he became aware of the curse of untouchability. In his words: “I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This idea was not brought home to me by my bitter experiences during S [outh] African struggle. It is not due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think—as some people do—that I have taken my views from my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back as time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible.”

It is very difficult to find out the origin of untouchability. Even though most of the Pandits are of the opinion that it has the sanction of Vedas Gandhi was not is a position to accept this view. He said that “If it

"full substitute for armed revolt", as well even for civil disobedience. *Ibid.* 106, “Civil Disobedience is not absolutely necessary to win freedom through purely non-violent effort, if the cooperation the whole nation is secured in the Constructive Programme” Gandhi quoted in *Ibid*, p.106


136 *CWMG, Vol. 23*, p. 42
was proved to me that this is an essential part of Hinduism. I for one would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself.\textsuperscript{137} His struggle was only against the practice of untouchability and not against the removal of caste system. “Caste I consider a useful institution if properly regulated. Untouchability is a crime against God and humanity. I would purify the former, I would destroy the latter”.\textsuperscript{138} He desired the caste system to remain in the original form that is having only four divisions which is based on occupation. What he criticized and stood against was the modern caste system which has a fifth division of untouchables. In his view the division of caste was completely based upon occupation and there was no room for high and lowness. According to him in Hindu shastras and Vedas equal respect was given to each caste of Hindu society. So there was nothing wrong in following Varna or caste system in its original form. But he never included inter-dining and inter-marriage as essential criteria in the removal of untouchability. In his conclusion “Varna is wrongly understood today........ Untouchability must go, and Varnas should have nothing to do with interdining or intermarriage”.\textsuperscript{139}

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\textsuperscript{137} CWMG, Vol. 14, p. 429
\textsuperscript{138} CWMG, Vol. 20, p.358
\textsuperscript{139} CWMG, Vol. 50, (1972 edition), p.228
\end{footnotesize}
According to T.K. Ravindran:

"Approval of caste system and disapproval of untouchability at the same time were necessarily a political expediency as far as Gandhi and Congress were concerned. They wanted the depressed classes and outcastes to remain within the fold of Hinduism along with caste-Hindus. Without the support of the lower castes, who were in the majority compared with all other upper caste groups in India, the nationalist movement would have remained mainly a caste-Hindu phenomenon. In order to win them over, Congress had to espouse their cause. The easiest means to do that was to take up the programme of removal of untouchability. But the leadership of the congress and its membership largely, rested on caste-Hindus. It will be highly inexpedient, therefore, to advocate eradication of caste itself; Gandhi well recognized this fact when he broke away from other reformers, by declaring his firm faith in caste and his opposition to interdining and inter-marriage, which he did not think desirable even as a matter of individual freedom".  

Later, when Gandhi came to the forefront of the Indian National Movement he gave equal importance to anti-untouchability campaign along with Hindu-Muslim unity. The resolution on non-violent non-co-operation had in its programme campaign against untouchability: All should try to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity and likewise, end the bitterness prevailing among the various sections in the country. The quarrels between Brahmins and non-Brahmins should be ended, the sin of untouchability eradicated.\(^{141}\)

Gandhi considered untouchability as an obstacle in the way of the attainment of Swaraj. So it should be removed from the Hindu society in order to attain, Swaraj. So long as the Hindus willfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment.\(^{142}\) We can be called true Swarajists only if we do tapascharya\(^{143}\) to get pure Swaraj which will provide cool shelter to all.\(^{144}\)

\(^{141}\) *CWMG, Vol. 22*, p.191
\(^{142}\) *CWMG, Vol. 23*, p.44
\(^{143}\) self-suffering as moral discipline
\(^{144}\) *CWMG, Vol. 23*, p. 57
In his opinion Indians don't have right to lead a movement against British Raj for *Swaraj* unless they were free from the evil of untouchability. "Swaraj is as inconceivable without full reparation to the 'depressed' classes as it is impossible without real Hindu-Muslim unity. In my opinion we have become 'pariahs of the Empire' because we have created 'pariahs' in our midst. The slave owner is always more hurt than the slaves. We shall be unfit to gain Swaraj so long as we would keep in bondage a fifth of the population of Hindustan.....And if it is religion so to treat the 'pariah'; it is the religion of the white race to segregate us."  

Unity among the various sections of the Indian society a must in leading a struggle against Britishers otherwise the Britishers would exploit the situation by placing one section against other. "This Government of ours is an unscrupulous corporation. It has ruled by dividing Mussulmans from Hindus. It is quite capable of taking advantage of the internal weaknesses of Hinduism. It will set the 'depressed' classes against the rest of the Hindus, non-Brahmins against Brahmins."  

"The structure of the Government rests entirely on the foundation of our weaknesses. Today, it may be the Hindu-Muslim question, tomorrow it may be that of Brahmins and non-Brahmins, then again that of untouchability, .....This

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145 *CWMG, Vol. 22, p. 6*  
Government has exploited all these weaknesses of ours. It is because of this that I have described our movement as one of self-purification." He adopted the anti-untouchability campaign against the divide and rule policy of the British government.

To the question put forward by a gentle man from Ankleshwar that by introducing the issue of untouchability in the national movement Gandhi have done great harm to the country he answered that "some social questions are of such magnitude that they cannot but be made political issues. If we dismiss the question of Hindu-Muslim unity as a social one, our cart will get stalled in the very first stage of the journey. The problem of Brahmins and non-Brahmins in the South has become so acute that any political party which tries to bypass it will commit suicide. It is easy to decide whether or not a particular issue should be taken up in the national struggle. There is no choice but to solve a problem which, if left unsolved, would block our progress. I am positively of the view that, had I not taken up the problem of untouchability, our struggle would have made no headway."  

147 CWMG, Vol. 24, p.90
148 CWMG, Vol. 24, pp. 89-90
After the withdrawal of the Non Cooperation movement Congress turned its attention towards the constructive programme of Gandhi. "In 1923, the congress decided to take active steps towards the eradication of untouchability. 'The basic strategy it adopted was to educate and mobilize opinion among caste Hindus on the question.'\textsuperscript{149}

One of the important work that Congress carried on in south India as a part of the campaign against untouchability was the movement for temple-entry in Kerala. The first major struggle of the movement was the famous Vaikam Satyagraha in north Travancore. The roads around the great Siva temple at Vaikam in north Travancore were closed to \textit{avarna} Hindus. The demand at Vaikam was not for temple entry, but for the right of \textit{avarna} Hindus to use the roads near the temple.\textsuperscript{150}

Vaikkam Satyagraha began on March 30, 1924.\textsuperscript{151} Volunteers arrived from different parts of Kerala. This Satyagraha generated enthusiasm in regional as well as national level. Gandhi advised volunteers on their methods of Satyagraha. He was not in favour of receiving any outside help for the Satyagraha. He also prevented Muslims

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\textsuperscript{149} Bipan Chandra, et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p.230
\textsuperscript{151} T.K. Ravindran, \textit{op. cit.}, p.57
\end{flushleft}
and Christians from participating in the Satyagraha. He advised the Vaikkam Deputationists that steps should be taken to arrange an absolutely peaceful and non-violent procession from Vaikkam to Trivandrum and back consisting of caste Hindus alone. But the Savarna Hindu Jatha failed in getting any concession from the Maharani Sethu Laxmi Bai.

Vaikkam Satyagraha prolonged for a year. People lost their patience and turned to violent methods. Gandhi’s visit to Vaikkam eased the situation. Gandhi and Police Commissioner Mr. Pitt arrived at a compromise formula on the basis of which Satyagraha was called off on 23rd November, 1925 and all the roads around Vaikkam temple, except two lanes, were opened to all castes.

It was in Vaikkam that the Satyagraha was experimented in its complete form to eradicate a social evil. It was the first major movement for the removal of untouchability in no ambiguous term. Infact, it represented a turning point in the campaign against untouchability. It

152 Ibid., p.96
153 AICC File No. 14(Part I) 1925, NMML
154 T.K. Ravindran, op. cit., p.203
156 B. Natesan, ‘Mahatma Gandhi and Untouchability’, The Indian Review, March,
remained within the limits of Gandhi’s plan. It failed in securing the declared objective. But it bolstered the spirits of demoralized Congress. It was with this movement the Congress in Malabar could attempt to bring all the castes into one consolidated movement.157

Another important movement for temple entry which became popular was the Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931-32). The Satyagraha was started on November 1st, which was observed as All Kerala Temple Entry Day. The Volunteers were led to the temple premises in a jatha and two Satyagrahis- each one belonging to the lower castes- were posted on all three entrances to the temple.158 It roused the passions of the people and they attempted to force entry into the temple which resulted in violence the temple was closed K. Kelappan the leader of the Satyagraha entered on an indefinite fast on 21 September, 1932.159 On Gandhi’s advice he broke his fast on October 2, 1932.160 Gandhi suggested holding a referendum to solve the problem. A limited referendum was held thereafter under the auspices of the Congress among the Hindus of Ponnani taluk in order to ascertain the views of the people on the issue of

157 Dilip M. Menon, op. cit., p.82
159 Ibid., p. 177
160 K. Kelappan, Oral History Transcripts, NMML.
temple entry. About 70% of the people signified their approval of temple entry for untouchables. Though the Guruvayur Satyagraha failed to achieve its immediate objective, it had helped to create a climate in favour of the eradication of untouchability and also mobilized the masses and gave them access to the political movements.

The Guruvayur Satyagraha had been successfully 'nationalized' and made to conform to the necessities of national politics. In Malabar, Gandhi's intervention hobbled a significant movement towards a politics which could have embraced lower castes and untouchables.

In assessing the results of the movement we must take into consideration the ideological impact the movement created rather than confine ourselves to an evaluation of the apparent result of the failure to get the temple opened for the untouchables. For the first time in Malabar the movement focused the plight of the untouchables and it created a 'social mobility' which was conducive for the success of the later political movements. It should be noted that it was only in areas where the C.D.M. was strong that peasants and workers movements grew up in strength in the late thirties.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{161} K. Gopalan Kutty, \textit{op. cit} p180
Following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact the Civil-Disobedience Movement was temporarily suspended in March 1931. Congress decided to take part in the second session of the Round Table Conference which began in September 1931. Gandhi was the sole representative of the congress. Besides Gandhi some of the newcomers in the Conference were Muhammed Iqbal, the Business magnate J.D. Birla, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu and Ali Imam. But they failed in arriving at a unanimous opinion. Civil Disobedience Movement was resumed in January 1932.

The British Prime minister announced the Communal Award in August 1932. The Award allotted to each minority a number of seats in the legislatures to be elected on the basis of a separate electorate that is Muslims would be elected only by Muslims and Sikhs only by Sikhs, and so on. Muslims, Sikhs and Christians had already been treated as minorities. The Award declared the Depressed Classes (Scheduled Castes of today) also to be a minority community entitled to separate electorate and thus separated them from the rest of the Hindus.\(^\text{162}\) Gandhi who was in Yeravda jail at that time, strongly reacted against it. Even though separate electorate was given to other communities also Gandhi reacted

\(^{162}\) Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 290
against the separate electorate provided to the depressed classes. About which he said: “Muslims and Sikhs are all well organized. The untouchables are not. There is very little political consciousness among them and they are so horribly treated that I want to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates, their lives would be miserable in villages which are the strongholds of Hindus orthodoxy. It is the superior class of Hindus who have to do penance for having neglected the untouchables for ages. That penance can be done by active social reform and by making the lot of the untouchables more bearable by acts of service, but not by asking for separate electorates for them. By giving them separate electorates you will throw the apple of discord between the untouchables and the orthodox. You must understand I can tolerate the proposal for special representation of the Mussalmans and the Sikhs only as a necessary evil. It would be a positive danger for the untouchables.”

Nationalists also opposed the separate electorates as it would help only in separate the depressed classes from the rest of Hindus. ‘What was needed was not the protection of the so-called interests of the Depressed classes in terms of seats in the legislatures or jobs but the ‘root and branch’ eradication of untouchability.’

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163 CWMG, Vol. 54, p. 83
164 Bipan Chandra, et. al., op. cit., p.291
Mahatma Gandhi established the All India Anti-Untouchability League on 28 September, 1932. It was renamed as Harijan Sevak Sangh in December 1932. The Sangh started numerous schools for the Dalits including residential vocational schools. In addition, scavengers' unions, cooperative credit societies, and housing societies, were formed. He also started a weekly called Harijan in order to propagate the need for Harijan upliftment work. In 1933 Gandhi confessed the failure of the movement and resigned his membership of the congress. He withdrew from active politics and confined his work for the uplift of Harijans. On 7 November 1933 Mahatma Gandhi began his countrywide tour to propagate against the evil of untouchability. The tour was started from Wardha and ended at Varanasi. He toured for nine months covering more than 20,000 kilometers, addressing meetings, collecting funds and making the caste Hindus aware of the adverse effects of untouchability on Hindu society. The tour had lifted the Depressed Classes problem from the status of a social reform to the pedestal of the greatest socio-religious upheaval of Modern Hinduism and perhaps the biggest humanitarian

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165 R.K. Kshirsagar, *op. cit.* p.118
167 *Home Political, F. No. 50/15/33*
movement of modern times. But through tout his campaign; he was attacked by orthodox and social reactionaries. Even then he continued his campaign.

Gandhi's decisions to withdrew from active politics and confine his work to the upliftment of Harijans annoyed other Congress leaders and the masses as well. Jawaharlal reacted: "The concentration on non-political issues and the personal and self-created entanglements which led Gandhi to desert his comrades in the middle of the struggle were amazingly casual and likely to be fatal to the movement.

Vithalbhai Patel and Subhas Bose characterized the decision taken by Gandhi to suspend the civil disobedience an "admission of defeat" and the statement continued, "The later action of Mr. Gandhi in suspending Civil Disobedience is a confession of failure. We are clearly of the opinion the Mr. Gandhi as a political leader has failed. The time has therefore, come for a radical re-organization of the Congress on a new principle with a new method, for which a new leader is essential, as it is unfair to expect Mr. Gandhi to work the programme not consistent with

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169 AICC File No.G-14, 1934-35, NMML
170 See Bipan Chandra et. al, op. cit, p.292
his life-long principles.” E.M.S. was of the opinion that “...this was a great blow to the freedom movement. For this led to the diversion of the people’s attention from the objective of full independence to the mundane issue of uplift of the Harijans.”

E.M.S. says that Gandhi always worked according to the interests of the bourgeois. He considers this as a reason which made Gandhi to turn his attention from the civil Disobedience movement to a comparatively lesser problem of the upliftment of Harijans. As against this he also argues that Gandhi adopted such a method to overcome the existing political crisis and thereby to re open a channel to make discussions with the British. ‘With this aim in mind he selected the Harijan upliftment programme which had both political and social character.’

British government felt that “although Mr. Gandhi’s present activities are confined to questions of social reform, he has not yet abandoned his creed of hostility to Government, nor has be called off the

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Civil disobedience movement”. They also worried that “whatever may be the nominal purpose of these subscriptions, their effect is to add to the funds available for Mr. Gandhi’s political purposes.” Even though it was generally considered as a social reform movement government decided to adopt a neutral stand on the issue.

**Gandhi and Ambedkar:**

B.R. Ambedkar, a Mahar from a Ratnagiri army family, appeared on the political scene for the first time in 1919, when he was called to testify to the Southborough Committee. He became an undisputed leader of Dalits.

In Ambedkar’s opinion “The Hindus have an innate and inveterate conservatism and they have a religion which is incompatible with liberty, equality and fraternity i.e. with democracy.” Ambedkar traces the development of the untouchables to the traditional caste system. According to him, untouchability is the product of caste system. But Gandhi does not accept this view of Ambedkar. Gandhi is opposed to the

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176 Home Political File No. 4/13/1933, NAI
177 Ibid.
178 Antony Copley, *Gandhi Against the Tide*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998 (Second Impression), p. 76
idea that untouchables are the by-product of the caste system. Ambedkar stood for the complete elimination of caste system and Gandhi was a strong believer in the caste system.\textsuperscript{180} This led to a strong difference of opinion between them. According to Ambedkar it was the Dalits themselves to lead the struggle against the domination of the caste Hindus. But Gandhi argued that it was the caste-Hindus who should lead the movement against untouchability. He considered it as sin committed by the caste-Hindus and he want them to atone for this. Ambedkar considered that unless the Indian people secured political power and that power did not concentrate in the hands of the socially suppressed section of the Indian society, it was not possible to completely wipe out all social, legal and cultural disabilities, from which that section suffered.\textsuperscript{181} To Ambedkar Gandhi’s Harijan Sevak Sangh was “one of the main techniques which has enabled Mr. Gandhi to be a successful humbug.”\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{180} Gandhi disagreed with Dr. Ambedkar when the latter asserted that ‘the outcaste is a by-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. And nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system. ‘On the contrary, Gandhiji said that whatever the ‘limitations and defects’ of Varnashram, ‘there is nothing sinful about it, as there is about untouchability.’ He believed that purged of untouchability, itself a product of ‘the distinction of high and low’ and not of the caste system, this system could function in a manner that would make each caste ‘complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other.’-Bipan Chandra, et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 294

\textsuperscript{181} A.R. Desai, \textit{Social...}, P.268

\textsuperscript{182} B.R. Ambedkar, \textit{op. cit.}, p.6
In the First Round Table Conference ‘Ambedkar spoke at the conference for a unitary state and adult suffrage with reserved seats and safeguards for untouchables.’\textsuperscript{183} Congress was absent in the first Round Table Conference. Following Gandhi-Irwin Pact Congress decided to attend the second Round Table Conference as the sole rep. of the Indian people. The failure of the second Round Table Conference and the communal Award led to a confrontation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Gandhi and nationalists stood against the separate electorate to untouchables. He said “I look upon the problem of untouchability from a purely religious point of view. There must be, therefore, no separate electorates in any case. But the reservation of seats for them, if it is statutory, will not test the caste Hindus and, therefore, will not be a real \textit{Prayashchitta}’ on their part. We cannot bargain with the ‘untouchables’. What is necessary is that the suspicion which they harbour in their minds should go.”\textsuperscript{184} But Ambedkar supported it. And it led to an open confrontation between Gandhi and Ambedkar. When Ambedkar changed his position to support separate electorates (which he did when it was obvious there would be no universal suffrage) he came to represent, very simply, the most vulnerable force among all those claiming special

\textsuperscript{183} Gail Omvedt, \textit{Dalits And The Democratic Revolution – Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India}, Sage Publications, New Delhi,1994, p.69

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{CWMG}, Vol. 55, p. 429
Both of them claimed to speak on behalf of untouchables. There was a vast difference in points of view, with Ambedkar stressing the need for political power for the Dalits, and with Gandhi arguing for reform and protection from above.\textsuperscript{186}

Gandhi demanded that the representatives of the depressed classes should be elected by the general electorate under a wide, if possible universal, common franchise. In order to get his demand accepted he decided to go on fast unto death on 20 September 1932. He said that his fast is only against separate electorates, and not against statutory reservation of seats. ‘The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the “depressed” classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise no matter how wide it is.\textsuperscript{187} Herald Tribune an American journal wrote that Gandhi now speaks not to occidental gallery but “as high caste Hindu in defence of exclusive right of this

\textsuperscript{185} Gail Omvedt, op. cit., p. 170
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{187} CWMG, Vol. 56, p. 347
social, racial and religious aristocracy to dispose of material and political affairs of bottom castes. He is calling on his fellow aristocrats to resist British decision that would arm pariah against caste system. Gandhi does not question justice of British allocation of representatives to non-Hindu minorities in India but alleges his reading to starve rather than see seventy millions of his fellow Hindus who are in social inferiors guaranteed even relatively small voice in India’s Legislative Councils.”

The Fast came to an end with the Yeraveda Pact also known as Poona Pact between the leaders acting on behalf of the depressed classes and of the rest of the Hindu community, regarding the representation of the depressed classes in legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare. Gandhi broke the fast when Government accepted the Pact “...as I have already said. When on the British Government’s acceptance of relevant portion of the pact I broke the fast, I solemnly assured Dr.

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188 Home Political File No. 35/25/1932, NAI
189 This conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto shall have the same rights as the other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and other public institutions. These right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity, and shall be one of the earliest Act of the Swaraj parliament, if they shall not have received such recognition before that time. It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by caste Hindus upon the so-called untouchable classes, including bar in the respect of admission to temples. (This resolution was drafted Gandhiji and passed by the by conference with Malaviyaji in the chair on September 25, 1932. CWMG Vol. 58, P. 311
Ambedkar and took a vow in the secret of my heart and in the presence of God that I would hold myself as a hostage for the fulfillment of the resolution above mentioned, and the general carrying out of the pact by the caste Hindus. It would be a betrayal of trust and a betrayal of the Harijans if, in any shape or form, I slackened my effort or gave up altogether the intention of fasting in connection with the removal of untouchability.\footnote{Ibid., pp.311-312}

According to the Poona Pact the idea of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes was abandoned but the seats reserved for them in the provincial legislatures were increased from seventy-one in the Award to 147 and in the Central Legislature to eighteen percent of the total.

The Poona Pact ended the confrontation between Gandhi and Ambedkar for the time being with the formation of Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932 there started difference of opinion regarding the organization and the programmes of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. There were two issues: whether the League/Sangh would be controlled by caste Hindus or whether the Dalits would have at least a share in control; and whether it would seek only to ‘abolish untouchability’ or aim at the abolition of Chaturvarnya itself. Gandhi firmly held out for caste Hindu control on the
grounds that since Hindus themselves must do this; he also stressed that
he was not against *Chaturvarnya* as a system. It was simply impossible
for Gandhi and Ambedkar to work together on this basis.\(^{191}\)
The break was complete when they adopted different ways for the emancipation of
the Dalits. Following the Poona Pact, Gandhi began an anti-untouchability
drive that included temple entry and bills in legislatures throughout the
country as well as the longer-term ‘Harijan campaign.’ Ambedkar and his
followers, in contrast, turned to a clear rejection of Hinduism and to
economic and political radicalism, expressed in the conversion
announcement of 1935 and the founding of the Independent Labour Party
in 1936.\(^{192}\)

Even though Gandhi started the anti-untouchability movement as a
religious movement or for the purification of Hindu society it had a
positive impact on the political movement. With his anti-untouchability
campaign he was able to bring a section of the Indian Society who were
hitherto politically not mobilized. According to Sumit Sarkar, “From a
more long-term point of view, Harijan welfare work by Gandhi must have
indirectly helped to spread the message of nationalism down to the lowest

\(^{191}\) Gail Omvedt, *op. cit.* p.176

and most oppressed section of rural society." But he criticizes Gandhi for confining the Harijan campaign to limited social reform (opening of wells, roads, and particularly temples, plus humanitarian work), delinking it from any economic demands (though very many Harijans were agricultural labourers) and also refusing to attack caste as a whole. According to him 'Gandhian Harijan work seems to have been in part a bid to establish hegemony over potentially more radical pressures from below.' Gail Omvedt opines that 'the failure of Gandhism to go beyond a spiritualistic and Hinduistic interpretation of a decentralized and village-based development left the anti-caste movement in a vacuum.' What was more important is not the religious emancipation of Dalits but the fact that the anti-untouchability campaign of Gandhi created a situation conducive for the political movements.

While fighting untouchability he never attacked caste system moreover he advocated caste system. The reason for this may be not to alienate the upper caste Hindus who were dominant in congress leadership. Gandhi knew very well that his Harijan upliftment movement would annoy the caste Hindus and without their support it was not

194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 Gail Omvedt, op. cit, pp.226-227
possible to start such a movement. By advocating caste system he tried to seek the support of the upper caste Hindus. And by identifying himself as an untouchable he tried to impress the untouchables. He conducted tours to stir the enthusiasm of the masses and thereby he got opportunity to have informal political discussions.  

Gandhi’s work for the uplift of the Harijans and Adivasis, who formed the bulk of the agricultural labourers, was also very important, for there could be no united struggle against colonialism without their support, active or passive. They would otherwise also be open to attempts by colonial authorities to create divisions among the rural masses during periods of struggle. Khadi and Harijan work had significance. Without their social and economic uplift, people who were suppressed for centuries were not able to conceive of participating in struggles of any kind. Contrary to certain present day myth, the very poor and the demoralized do not find it easy to fight. Constructive work filled these sections with a new hope, helped and trained them to lose their fear, made them self-reliant and enabled at least some of them to join the struggle for freedom and for their own social and economic advancement.

197 E.M.S. History..., p. 295  
198 Bipan Chandra, Indian..., pp.38-39
While starting the movement he was not unaware of the political consequences of the movement. Even though he repeatedly stressed on the social and religious part of the movement it indirectly gave an opportunity to mobilize the Dalits. He considered it as a strategy against the divide and rule policy of the British. That may be the reason why he stressed unity among various section of Hindu society along with the Hindu-Muslim unity. He gave equal importance to both. From the very first movement onwards he stressed on the need for the eradication of untouchability. Dalits who were suppressed by the caste –Hindus considered him as a saviour. And he gave wide popularity to this movement by conducting tours and he identified himself as an untouchable by choice. The criticism leveled against him was that he confined the whole movement within religious frame work and never gave importance to the economic emancipation of the Dalits. But what is important here is the widening of the mass base of the national movement by mobilizing the downtrodden classes of India and thereby giving them also access in the national movement. And it is Gandhi who evolved serious programmes to participate them in the political movement whatever be the character of participation.
The participation of women in the National movement both during the Gandhian period and pre-Gandhian didn’t get enough importance in the writings about the National movement. The active participation of women in the National movement was not seen as a political activity but most of the historians tried to link women’s participation in the struggle with women’s education or the social reform movement. They do not examine either the reasons or the implications of this spontaneous upsurge of political activity by women of all classes.¹⁹⁹

Participation of women in the Indian National movement started even before the coming of Gandhi. “......the Indian National Congress, from its very inception, sought to align women with the nationalist cause; despite its variegated limitations, the Congress had evolved a tradition of women’s participation even in the pre-Gandhian era.”²⁰⁰ Swadeshi struggle witnessed the active involvement of women.²⁰¹ The mobilization of women was attempted through the publication of pamphlets, public

meetings held exclusively for women and new nationalist associations (in contrast to the elite association) which emerged during the Swadeshi period. While in early phase of the Congress movement women's participation was strictly limited, during the Swadeshi movement, as a broad programme of activity was evolved, women began to play an active role. Even then only the middle class women participated in the political activities. Except Sarala Devi Chaudharani there were no prominent leaders for the Swadeshi movement. It was a serious limitation of the movement. Even then the Swadeshi movement appears to have functioned as a 'catalyst' for women's politicization in Bengal and it is noteworthy that many of the Bengali women who were to later actively participate in Gandhian movements (such as Ashalata Sen for example) had gained their first political experience during the Swadeshi movement. With the Swadeshi Movement women's involvement with the nationalist movements started.

Even though the social reform movement for the emancipation of women was started during the period of Raja Mohan Roy itself it became a national issue with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi. Now they started

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202 Rajan Mahan, op. cit., p. xlvi
203 Ibid., p. 52
204 Ibid., p. 53
working actively in the national movement. One of the most amazing events of contemporary Indian history was the rapid entry of Indian women into politics especially after 1919.205

Gandhi never confined his activities in the political arena alone. Along with the political activities he tried to effect changes in the existing traditions and social customs without depreciating206 them altogether but by making certain changes to conform it to his political methods. His perception about women made a breakthrough in the existing pattern. “Instead of women being merely the recipients of more humane treatment, he gave subjectivity and centrality to women.”207

205 A.R. Desai, *Social...*, p. 278
206 “Women’s being placed on a level with Sudra has done unimaginable harm to Hindu society. These statements of mine may have verbal similarity with the occasional attacks of Christians, but, apart from this similarity, there is no other common ground between us. The Christians, in their attacks, seek to strike at the roots of Hinduism. I look upon myself as an orthodox Hindu and my attack proceed from the desire to rid Hinduism of its defects and restore it to its pristine glory. The Christian critic, by demonstrating the imperfection of Smritis, tries to show that they are just ordinary books. My attempt is to show that the imperfection of the smritis comes from interpolated passages, that is to say, verses inserted by persons accepted as smritikaras in the period of our degeneration. It is easy to demonstrate the grandeur of the smritis minus these verses. I do not have the slightest desire to put up a weak defence of Hinduism, believing out of false pride or in ignorance, and wanting others to believe that there is not error in the smritis or in the other accepted books of the Hindu religion. I am convinced that such an effort will not raise the Hindu religion but will degrade it rather. A religion which gives the foremost place to truth can afford no admixture of untruth.” Gandhi's Speech at Bhagini Samaj, Bombay, Feb.20, 1918, *CWMG*, Vol.16, p. 272
It was argued that the whole system of Gandhian technique was such that women found no difficulty in participating in the movements organized by him. That is why 'women from all ranks of society, educated and uneducated, highly sophisticated ladies and rustic women, all gathered round him. Even women of orthodox families who had never been out of their homes joined in the struggle. Their men folk were sure that no harm could come to them in a movement guided and controlled by Gandhiji. Under his inspiring leadership, his fostering care and loving guidance they could play a significant part in the freedom fight.'

Through Satyagraha he brought Indian women to public life.

Gandhi was very much aware of the traditions that badly affected the women and relegated them to the status of Shudras. He vehemently criticized child marriage and enforced widowhood of girls at a very young age. He advocated change in the marriageable age but he was of the opinion that "it is not legislation that will cure a popular evil, it is enlightened public opinion that can do it."
He was against the Purdah System and discarded it describing as “recent institution”.\textsuperscript{210} He also criticized the parents for not providing education to girl child. He supported girls’ education and in his opinion education imparted to girls should be different from that of boys because, “nature has made men and women different, it is necessary to maintain a difference between education of the two.”\textsuperscript{211}

Gandhi was a firm advocate of equality between men and women. In his opinion, “men and women are of equal rank, but they are not identical. Man is supreme in the outward activities and home life is entirely the sphere of woman.”\textsuperscript{212} Gandhi had confidence that women would be able to face any challenge. He did not hesitate to send women to face difficult situations. In the words of Sucheta Kripalani, “.....during his historic tour in Noakhali, I remember once he decided to send young Abha out to work in a difficult village......where there was intense bitterness between the Hindus and Muslims.”\textsuperscript{213}

Moreover he argued that, “women must have votes and an equal legal status. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the

\textsuperscript{211} CWMG, Vol. 16, pp. 93-94
\textsuperscript{212} CWMG, Vol. 16, p. 275. The Hindu, 26/2/1918
\textsuperscript{213} Sucheta Kripalani, op. cit., p. 49
point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation.  

Gandhi included the service of women in his constructive programme. In which he asked congress men to enable women to realize their full status and play their part as equals of men. "Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from the previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fullness in their behaviour towards women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. It is the privilege of Congressmen to give the women of India a lifting hand."  

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214 *Young India*, 21/7/1921  
Women and Political Activities:

Gandhi considered the lack of participation of women in the movements as a reason for the failure of the movements. "Many of our movements stop half-way because of the condition of our women. Much of our work does not yield appropriate results; our lot is like that of the penny-wise and pound-foolish trader who does not employ enough capital in his business."\textsuperscript{216}

Gandhi had faith in the capacity of women to participate in political activities. Women found no difficulty in participating in non-violent movements. His Khadi programme was also practicable for women.

The Indian tradition had a great influence upon him which is very clear from the fact that he often used to give examples of great female personalities of Hindu tradition.\textsuperscript{217} He used traditional symbols to convey contemporary socio-political messages upon the deep resources available within themselves as women and within their rich and fertile religio-cultural inheritance in order to participate in public life and play the vital

\textsuperscript{216} CWMG, Vol. 16, p.274. The Hindu, 26-2-1918.

\textsuperscript{217} To inspite the downtrodden women of India, Gandhi repeatedly mentioned about Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi but he totally dismissed the more “situationally relevant Rani of Jhansi”. Madhu Kishwar says that the stress was given to “the superiority of women’s suffering and self sacrifice rather than aggressive assertion and forceful intervention to protect their interests and to gain political power”. Madhu Kishwar, ‘Gandhi on Women’ in, \textit{EPW}, Vol. xx, No.40, October 5, 1985, pp.1691 - 1692
role which he envisaged for them in the struggle for Swaraj and the quest for Sarvodaya.\textsuperscript{218}

Satyagraha was based on the qualities which were traditionally associated with women: love, receptivity, dialogue, patience, ability to endure pain and suffering and faith in life. Far from regarding these feminine qualities as weak, Gandhi radicalized their meanings and gave a challenge to the dominant principle of masculinity.\textsuperscript{219} Gandhi considered women as the “incarnation of ahimsa” and since strength was moral power, woman was “immeasurably man’s superior”.\textsuperscript{220} His belief in the capacity of women to endure hardship (and the feminization of his own personality) enabled Gandhi to communicate with women and thereby make them active participants in the non-violent struggle for liberation.\textsuperscript{221}

Gandhian project did not see femininity / Spirituallity as an obstacle to be overcome; it was rather a source of immense potential and strength.\textsuperscript{222} The principles of Satyagraha and ahimsa, Swadeshi and Sarvodaya reflect a feminist critique of the powerful British State in India.

\textsuperscript{218} Rajan Mahan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 91
\textsuperscript{220} Gandhi Quoted in, \textit{Ibid.}, p.124
\textsuperscript{221} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{222} Ashis Nandy, quoted in \textit{Ibid.},
as ethically inferior to Swaraj. In Gandhi's Science of Swaraj, women appear as a collective representation by means of which the superiority and inviolability of indigenous social tradition is demonstrated against the modern.

According to Erik Erikson Gandhi's 'aggressive assertion of femininity' reflects a competitiveness in his mentality. In this view, Gandhi was unable to psychologically and emotionally accept the 'natural' superiority of women in possessing such virtues as love, kindness or ahimsa, and hence attempted to become more maternal than the most motherly of mothers. According to Vinaylal, "Gandhi was possessed of a civilization sensibility where the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine were not so easily drawn, a sensibility akin to that which produced images of the ardhanariswara in Indian art and culture, which could give birth to schools of painting where Radha is transformed into Krishna and Krishna in turn sports the looks and clothes of Radha and which today still has a place, albeit an increasingly maligned one, for a large number of people, the hijras, who live on the

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223 Amrit Srinivasan, 'Women and Reform of Indian Tradition: Gandhian Alternative to Liberalism' in Leela Kasturi and Veena Mazumdar edited, op. cit., p.7
border between the feminine and the masculine. The presence of the masculine within the feminine, and conversely of the feminine within the masculine, described a dialectical and dialogic relationship between the sexes.226

His vision of women was shaped by a multiplicity of sources. In addition to his personal upbringing, psychic predilections and cultural background, especially his relationships with his mother and wife, his vision was also moulded and refined by his long association with a large number of women colleagues and followers.227

Unlike the social reformers, Gandhi had realized some of the negative consequences of colonial rule on women’s economic status.228 The realization strengthened his decision to launch the khadi movement which would offer to the masses of women an immediate, open channel

227 Rajan Mahan, op. cit., p.89. His association with some efficient women like, Olivse Schreiner, Milllie Graham Polak, Sonya Schlesin etc. while he was in South Africa, convinced him the capacity of women to perform public activities. The works of his women associates in India for example, Sarojini naidu, Gungabehn, Anasuya Sarabhi, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandi, Madeleine Slade, Sushila Nayyar, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur etc. later proved this through their work. For a detailed account of the influence of these women on Gandhi, see, Eleanor Morton, Women Behind Mahatma Gandhi, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1961.
228 Mazumdhar, V., Quoted in Leela Kasturi and Veena Mazumdhar edited, op. cit., p.
for their participation in the national struggle. More than that through Khadi movement he want to convince men that women’s participation was as essential as the participation of men for the success of the Swadeshi and boycott movement. Later, he extended this argument to the winning of full freedom for India and nation-building. It aimed at the economic independence of women and so Gandhi’s Swaraj meant not political emancipation only but social and economic emancipation also.

Gandhi asked women to start spinning clubs. It was through spinning that he wanted to politicize women imbuing them with ideas of Swadeshi, opposition to foreign rule and also providing them with tangible evidence of their own participation in a political process. It would give them an idea of their role in the fight for economic freedom.\(^{229}\) The spinning could be undertaken at home and it would bring the issue of Swadeshi right inside the home and would make women participate in economic nationalism. In addition, it gave women a sense of participating in the movement without ignoring her traditional role. The effect was radical. As Sujata Patel has noted “this extension of politics to the

household made possible a radical review of women's role in her
domestic space and gave her a new status and legitimacy in this space.²²³⁰

Women's participations in these movements passed through three
successive stages: (i) the Kheda peasant Movement in 1918 which
constituted the formative period because the leaders of the Kheda
Satyagraha, Gandhi and Vallabhbhai, could not evolve a unilinear,
cohesive structure. (ii) The period between the Non-Co-Operation
Movement of 1920 and the Simon Commission of 1927 witnessed
increased political consciousness among women. During this phase they
came out as leaders, link leaders, volunteer and picketers, Spinners of
Khadi and political activists. (iii) The Bardoli peasant struggle in 1928
and the Dandi March of 1930 marked the mature phase of women's
participation. In each phase it was claimed city bred women were brought
closer and closer with the rural women. It had bridged the gulf between
them as Gandhiji had intended from the beginning.²³¹

While traveling in the villages of Kaira in order to organize the
people against the Government he made special appeal to the Kaira
women. In his Speech at Uttarsanda he said the "It was my hope that

²²³⁰ Sujata Patel, ‘Construction and Reconstruction of Woman in Gandhi’ in *EPW*,
February 20, 1988, p.383
²³¹ Shirin Mehta, *op. cit.*, p.186
women also would be present at this meeting. In this work there is as much need of women as of men. If women join our struggle and share our sufferings, we can do fine work.”\textsuperscript{232} Women responded to his call and participated in it actively. While addressing the public at Bombay he remarked thus: “Not only men, but women also have joined this struggle. Wonderful scenes are witnessed at the village meetings. The women declare that even if the government seize their buffaloes, attach their jewellery or confiscate their lands, the men must honour their pledge.”\textsuperscript{233}

As the first non-cooperation movement was launched he made special appeals to women asking them to spin, wear khadi, boycott government schools and colleges and remove untouchability. He asked women to sign pledges of non-cooperation. He compared British rule to Ravana and so the women must not cooperate with the Rakshasi Sarkar. “He asked women to participate in their husbands’ activities like Sita, Savitri and Damayanti.”\textsuperscript{234} He did not shut his eyes to the actual situation of women. He laid stress on that part of the non-cooperation movement in which women could participate without having to make the attempt to

\textsuperscript{232} Gandhi’s Speech at Uttarsanda, April 16, 1918, \textit{CW MG}, Vol. 16, P.396
\textsuperscript{233} Speech at a Public Meeting in Bombay, April 23, 1918, \textit{CW MG}, vol. 16, p. 457.
\textsuperscript{234} Aparna Basu, \textit{op. cit.}, p.8
break free of their fetters. Women were given special responsibility of popularizing Swadeshi.  

In the first non co-operation movement emphasis was laid on spinning. This enabled women to participate in the movement while remaining at home. "Perhaps a gradual release from age old restraints was considered more practicable by Gandhi".

Even though non-co-operation movement saw comparatively few women in participation the significance lies in their having come forth not in their numbers, but in the fact of their having organized meetings and demonstrations, and not in size of them. In a society where a child could become a widow before she had completed her first year of life, where girls were not educated lest they stray from the path of chastity or lose some of their submissiveness, it is significant that women responded at all to Gandhi’s call.

The factors responsible for the response of Indian women were Gandhi’s repeated emphasis on ethical standards of behaviour, on the principles of non-violence and besides all these, the basic Gandhian

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236 Aparana Basu, op. cit., p. 9
237 Uma Rao and Meera Devi, op. cit., p. 24
message for women was sensitive enough ‘to touch the hearts’ of Indian’s womanhood. He always exhorted that the involvement of women in the movement was integral to the success of the movement. And moreover he devised his programme in such a way that, even while remaining at home, women could contribute to the movement. Because of his repeated emphasis on non-violent movement the men folk also didn’t find any difficulty in sending their women to participate in Gandhian Movements. According to Tanika Sankar: “A more serious explanation would relate to the nature of the Gandhian movement itself and its implication for socially accepted, prescribed roles of women. Participation was intended for non-violent modes of action and would not entail the drastic violation of the feminine image that a violent struggle would have involved”. Participation in the Non-cooperation movement gave them an added inspiration to fight against the British Raj along with their men folk. The number of women participating in the first non-co-operation movement was not very great but their spirit of service and sacrifice was very much appreciable.

The Satyagraha movement which was inaugurated by Gandhiji was such that women could not sit and watch the battle between the

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238. Tanika Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 88
239. Radha Krishna Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 62
government and the people and so a quick response was made to the call of Mahatma Gandhi.240 “This was unique in the entire history of India, the spectacle of hundreds of women taking part in political mass movement, picketing liquor shops, marching in demonstrations, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets. At one stroke, the Indian women broke through their age long restrictions. From docile domestic servants to their husbands and other male folk, they rose to the level of citizens, voting political programmes and participating in big political movements. Some of them like Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, and Vijayalaxmi Pandit, even became leaders of international repute.”241 Though the number of women in active participation was very few and the number of women arrested very small, yet a beginning was made and an example set that, if need be, women would not hesitate to face the most difficult situations.

Even after the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement the Constructive Programme kept them active.242 During the period between 1922 and 1928 Gandhi “spoke to women’s groups about constructive

241 A.R. Desai, Social..., p. 279
242 Only a few people took to the constructive programme for the programme’s sake. The other people took to it as part of the freedom movement like Rukmini Lakshmipathi. They were mostly political minded. S.Ambujammal, Oral History Transcripts, NMML
work, continuously reiterating that Sita was the ideal role model and spinning could solve India’s and women’s problems.»\textsuperscript{243} And moreover various women’s organizations came into existence after the First World War. Three major organizations were: the Women’s Indian Association, the National Council of Women in India and the All-India Women’s Conference. The link between social reform, the status of woman and the national movement proved to be a source of vital political support for the women’s movement. And their participation became a potent source of numerical strength to the Congress led national movement. This mutually beneficial relationship inexorably led to considerable cooperation between leaders of the national movement and the women’s movement because the support for each issue, whether women’s or national was seen to further the struggle against colonialism.\textsuperscript{244}

Even though the women did not participate in the early stages of the Bardoli Satyagraha (in 1928) they outnumbered men in political gatherings and held their own separate meetings at the later stages. In the words of Aparna Basu, “Bardoli set a new example as this was the first

\textsuperscript{243} Geraldine Forbes, \textit{The New Cambridge History of India vol. 2 – Women in Modern India}, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p.129

\textsuperscript{244} See for details Rajan Mahan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.250-251
time that simple, uneducated, unsophisticated rural women participated in
the freedom struggle. 245

Women got an opportunity during the Civil-disobedience
movement of early 1930s. From 1930-34, i.e., from the beginning of Salt
Satyagraha in March 1930 until the final withdrawal of the Civil-
disobedience in May 1934 the support and involvement of women was an
essential element in the character of the anti-imperialist movement. But
participation in Civil-disobedience movement involved much greater risk
than the Non-cooperation movement of 1921 because of the policy of
indiscriminate brutality even towards absolutely peaceful satyagrahis.

Gandhi chose salt as a symbol of protest against the British Raj.
Even though at first everyone ridiculed Gandhi for having accepted the
violation of salt laws as a mark of protest later everyone found that his
Dandi march was effective in popularizing the movement. Indeed, the
choice of salt clearly proved Gandhi’s genius for seizing the significance
of the seemingly trivial but essential details of daily living which are
generally relegated to the women’s sphere and relating them effectively to
the nation endeavour. 246 Inevitably woman in thousands were inspired to

245 Aparna Basu, *op. cit.*, p. 10
246 Rajan Mahan, *op. cit.*, p. 265
actively participate in this campaign. Gandhi’s choice of salt as the central issue appears to have been a sensitive and brilliant ploy to articulate connections between private and public life in order to ensure women’s participation in the freedom struggle in increasing numbers and greater intensity.247

At first, women had not been allowed to participate as Gandhi had though they would complicate matters.248 But the women who were eager to be considered as equal to man could not sit back. The group of followers who accompanied Gandhi to Dandi was an all-male contingent. Women protested against this. Gandhi resisted women’s inclusion on the grounds that the British would call Indians cowards for hiding behind women, nevertheless as he marched to Dandi, women were present in large numbers at every stop on the way to greet and to imbibe Gandhi’s message.249

247 Ibid., p. 266
248 Gandhi did not want to keep women in the march. He believed that, since English men would hesitate to touch women they would interpret it as an act of cowardice. See for details, Rajan Mahan, op. cit., p.268. But Gandhi was not against the participation of women in such movement. It was very clear from the reply he had given to one worker “there is no question of any of you keeping aloof from the fiery furnace, should such ever come your way. I shall not shed a tear; I shall rejoice to hear, if any or all of you are found to have laid down your lives in trying to quell the disturbance. To be killed but never to kill is the law that governs us, and women should surely excel in this field.” – Harijan, 14-4-1946 and 28-4-1946
249 Rajan Mahan, op. cit., pp. 269-70
Later they were permitted to take part in all phases of the campaign.

"Thousand of women went to the sea coast like enthusiastic soldiers. But they wore neither uniforms nor carried weapons or even lathis. They had no training of any sort. They were mostly simple and illiterate women. People were ‘fascinated and awe-struck’ to see the unique scene."\(^{250}\) Gandhi gave them special programme to boycott foreign cloth and liquor shops through which he endorsed a more active political role which women had been demanding and yearning for. According to Geraldine Forbes "women’s participation in the civil disobedience movement of 1930-32 differed qualitatively and quantitatively from the early 1920s and won them a place in history."\(^{251}\)

In Bombay Muslim women showed great interest in the Congress movement. They assemble to hear Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Perin Captain, Gangaben Patel, Hansa Mehta and other leading members of the Women’s movement in Bombay. These leaders had an interesting talk with a large number of Muslim ladies who had assembled to hear about the importance and nation wide implications of the Congress movement. The Muslim ladies were very enthusiastic

\(^{250}\) Radha Krishan Sharma, _op. cit._, pp. 65-66  
\(^{251}\) Geraldine Forbes, _op. cit._, p.129
particularly about the Swadeshi programme. As a part of the propaganda two meetings were held at Parel in which Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Gangaben Patel explained to the women the implications of the Salt Civil-disobedience and the need for boycott of foreign cloth. The speakers were eagerly listened to and great enthusiasm was shown when Kamaladevi demonstrated the making of contraband salt from sea water.

The response from women was spontaneous, strong and strikingly noteworthy. They had determined to participate in the movement in the face of various punishments inflicted by the Government. The Government tried to crush the movement by lathi charge, shooting, arrests etc. Even at the face of such brutal repression they participated in the movement. That, despite such repression thousands of woman all over the sub-continent participated frequently in the second phase of Civil-disobedience was an eloquent testimony to their heroism and indicates the extent of women’s activisation during this momentous period.

253 Ibid. In Payyannur in north Kerala where the Salt Satyagraha campaign for Malabar district was inaugurated, women went to the sea, collected water in pots which they brought back to their houses and prepared contraband salt in their own houses. I am indebted to Dr. Anandi for this information.
254 Rajan Mahan, op. cit., p.298
atrocities did not discourage the women, but activated the desire in them to suffer more, to sacrifice more and to achieve more.255

The report issued by All India Congress Committee says: Total arrests up to the end of June are 2005, 933 of them being convicted. It is a “happy feature”, says the report, “that woman even in Purdah and pregnant ladies – are pouring in huge numbers in the cause of their motherland. The untiring zeal with which the lady satyagrahis worked shoulder to shoulder with the male volunteers and made the cause a greater success cannot be over estimated. The number of lady Satyagrahis is more than 138.” It is noteworthy that women braved abuse, insults, and even lathis along with their satyagrahi brothers. The Andhra Police seems to be mean enough not to spare women even from their undignified behaviour. The report describes nine cases of ill-treatment of women.256

According to Tanika Sarkar, “Massive arrests of nationalist men, right at the beginning of the movement, necessitated such large scale dependence on women.”257 More over now the women started considering the participation in the political movement as a part of their religious duty.

255 Man Mohan Kaur, *op. cit.*, p.169
256 Bulletin issued by the All India Congress Committee, *AICC File No.12, 1932*, NMML, p.89
257 Tanika Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.140
"During the Salt War he had made heroines out of women living in purdah."\textsuperscript{258}

The role of women in the Civil-disobedience movement was reported in the first chapter of the report of the All India Congress Committee. Excerpts from the report are given below:

The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 worked many a miracle, but there was no greater miracle than the part of the women in this campaign. How deeply it had affected the people and touched the mainspring of Indian society was evidenced by the social revolution it brought about silently and without apparent effort. The shy and retiring woman of India, unused to the rough and tumble of politics, came out of the shelter of her home and insisted on being in the forefront of the struggle. When her men folk went to prison she did not flinch, but shouldered the burden and exhibited not only her wonderful powers of sacrifice and endurance, with which she is endowed in such rich measure, but surprising powers of organization and initiative. Many played a brave part in the deeds of 1930 and many are

\textsuperscript{258} Eleanor Morton, op. cit., p. 230
entitled to a measure of credit for the achievement that came. All classes, in greater or less degree, joined in the struggle - Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, Jews etc. But all recognize and admit that the real credit and glory of achievement belongs to the womanhood of India. From the very beginning picketing and the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor were placed by Gandhiji in their charge and, as the campaign developed, they assumed more and more responsibility and largely directed the movement. Nearly one thousand of them went to prison. In most cities their kesari saris were familiar sights – emblems of gentleness and firmness, of courage and sacrifice and a terror to evil doers.259

The work of the women’s organization was mainly focused on legal disabilities. But their concern for the welfare of the nation led them toward Gandhi’s programme of reconstruction and social action. Women advocated equal rights. So they decided to support every law that seemed progressive. But Gandhi disagreed with this. Instead of supporting every

259 AICC File No. G-2, 1931, NMML, AICC meeting held at Karachi on March 27th, 1931 directed Syed Mahmud, Jairamdas Doulatram, Jawaharlal Nehru (General Secretaries) to prepare a “full report of the year 1930” – “that the report do contain facts and figures relating to the Civil Disobedience movement”.
measure for reform he wanted them to spend their time in the villages learning about local customs which, he thought, would make them understand that legal changes were irrelevant for most rural women.\textsuperscript{260}

During the 1937 elections most of the followers of Gandhi came out successful. But the more striking triumph was that among his disciples who were elected was a woman – Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who was chosen to represent her constituents in the United Provinces Assembly. Vijaya Lakshmi told the press, “There are fifty-five of our women in high positions – more than in any other land!”\textsuperscript{261}

Gandhi was arrested on 9\textsuperscript{th} August 1942. The Quit India movement which followed was leaderless and not properly organized since all senior members of the Congress working committee were immediately arrested. As news of their arrests spread, spontaneous demonstrations broke out and women were quick to respond to Gandhi’s call. They look out processions, held meetings and demonstrations and organized strikes in schools and colleges. Young girls and old women showed remarkable courage in giving shelter to man under warrants of arrest. Women in different towns and villages organized \textit{prabhat pheris}, picketed outside

\textsuperscript{260} Geraldine Forbes, \textit{op. cit.}, p.115  
\textsuperscript{261} Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit quoted in Eleanor Morton, \textit{op. cit.}, p.302
Government offices, schools and colleges. Women’s participation in the Quit India movement was much bolder, more spontaneous and unstructured than in the previous agitation.

There were several criticism regarding the work assigned to women by Gandhi. Even though Gandhi as a social reformer was against the Purdah system the duties which he assigned women were such that to confine them within the four walls of their home.

While on the other hand a demand was being made to abolish purdah, on the other, a tacit recognition was being given to the system by laying stress on activities centering on charka. This was an activity which could be carried on in the home.

One important factor which succeeded in mobilizing women was that the entire programme of Gandhi was such that it did not challenge the traditional patriarchal family structure. Political participation was not to be at the cost of domestic duties. Service to her husband, family and country were a woman’s primary duty. Men, therefore, did not perceive Gandhi’s appeal to women to join his movement as a threat to their dominance within the family. He was trying to use the Indian Woman’s

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262 Aparna Basu, *op. cit.*, p.13
263 *Ibid.*, p. 15
traditional role and qualities and in the political sphere also. Indian woman was used to sacrificing for her husband, her husband, her children, her family; now she was asked to suffer and sacrifice for her country as well.264

Another factor was Gandhi’s personal charisma. According to Alice Thorner, “The broadening of women’s vistas through the active role they took in the mass struggles of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s has been often related and attributed primarily to the charisma of Gandhi.”265 The entire principles of Gandhi such as Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Swadeshi and Sarvodaya were suitable to women. He gave importance to moral courage than physical prowess.

Gandhi’s attempt had been to broaden the base of the Indian National Movement and to bring the hitherto uninvolved elements in to the political forefront. As a part of his programme of mass mobilization Gandhi decided to mobilize the women. And he succeeded in mobilizing them. It was undoubtedly Gandhi who gave them inspiration, assurance and support. By involving the women in programmes of national

264 Ibid., p.14
development, Gandhi increased their efficacy. Despite the drawbacks, his contribution was indeed unique. Gandhi had generated a pride and a passionate involvement in winning Swaraj and the *abala* strode ahead with confident self-reliance.\(^{266}\) Gandhi had opened a new world to the women of India. "Out of society girls, sheltered wives, cloistered students, out of plain working girls, out of a princess, he made leaders for new India. He demanded greatness of them and they found it in themselves – because of the need for greatness in them.\(^{267}\)

Even though Gandhi considered Harijans and women as the most downtrodden section of the society he was of the opinion that women should themselves take up the leadership of their movements instead of expecting men to do that. But in the case of Harijans he asked the upper class to provide the leadership to the Harijan upliftment movements.

Even though he tried to emancipate the women from her shackles his activities are not without an limitation. Madhu Kishwar says that Gandhi "tried charging women's position without either transforming their relation to the outer world of production or the inner world of family,

\(^{266}\) Uma Rao, 'Women in the Frontline: The case of UP' in Leelat Kasturi and Veena Mazumdharm, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.49
\(^{267}\) Eleanor Morton, *op. cit.*, p.305
Moreover, “he saw male and female in terms of the ‘active-passive’ complementary which has been an important ideological device for denying women any chance to acquire power and decision – making ability in the family and in society.” She considers the importance ascribed to morality in condition of women “reflects the age-old patriarchal bias”.

Sujata Patel says Gandhi failed to understand the reasons for the weakness of the women. He perceived women’s problem as an extension of the national question. But she herself contradicts it by saying the “Gandhi is the figure of that historical moment and his ideas on women show very clearly his intense involvement in the making of the history and design for that time.”

Tanika Sarkar says “if the goal of colonial exploitation is a ruinous drain of wealth and if the central purpose of the patriotic struggle is to reverse its flow, if freedom means, above all, the reappropriation of one’s own fortunes, possibilities and destiny, then the woman occupied a strategic position within the scheme with her ancient skill which would

268 Madhu Kishwar, op. cit., p.1699
269 Ibid.,
270 Ibid., p.1691
271 Sujata Patel, op. cit., p.381
272 Ibid., p.378
liberate Indian from the expensive, futile and ultimately fatal trap of western cure which kills rather than heals." She is also of the opinion that "Through their special role at the charka and with boycott, women assumed a centrality within the nationalist enterprise. Other forms of the enterprise sustained this centrality." 

Gandhi succeeded in making the women participate in the political movements and he was far more successful than his predecessors in this. They only attempted to make changes in the status of women. But Gandhi brought them to the political sphere. "Though the traditional roles of women were not challenged, women discovered their potential and strength as they became involved in the freedom struggle. They learned from Gandhiji that the weak could be strong and inner strength was more powerful than brute force." Often the spinning programme which he assigned to women met with much criticism. But the tremendous change that brought about in the life of women was a remarkable achievement of Gandhi. "It seems definite that if here had been no Gandhi in India,

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274 Ibid., p.169
progress of Indian women would have been very slow. What makes Gandhi different from others that he “saw women not as recipients of male favour but as potential agents for regenerating Indian society. By investing well-known mythological symbols with new meanings he turned the frailties of women into sources of strength and moral courage”.

Gandhi’s movement did not assume aggressively feminine postures. Here the goal was national freedom and it had none of the man-woman antagonism. Moreover men were its staunch supporters. Women were now conscious of their strength. “What social reformers had been struggling to achieve over half a century, Gandhiji did almost overnight. The status of women was completely transformed, for in life there is rarely a going back. The women of today carry themselves with new dignity and consciousness of their larger responsibilities. Sucheta Kripalani says that “Many a leader and reformer has espoused the cause of woman in this country but none held women in such high esteem as did the Father of the Nation. With infinite compassion and love he held us by

276 Radha Krishna Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 54
277 Maithreyi Krishnaraj, ‘Permeable Boundaries’ in Alice Thorner and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.28
279 Kamaldevi Chattopadiya, ‘What Gandhiji has done for women’ in *What Gandhiji Has Done For Inida*, Ilami Makz, YMCA, Lahore, 1946, p.69
the hand and led us forward to our rightful place in society." Gandhi thus, through his unique methods achieved what other social reformers of India failed to achieve.

What made Gandhi unique from other social reformers that he tried to bring women in to the political activities and made them aware about the political activities. He made them to participate in the movements organized by him. He even made the illiterate and ignorant rural women also participate in the movement. Along with political movement he tied to effect certain changes in the social conditions of the women also. Not only as a political leader but also as a social emancipator he led them. And while making the changes he kept in view of the realities of Indian condition. That made him unique from other political leaders and social reformers as well.

Gandhi was very well aware of the fact that only a well organized and united movement could erode the legitimacy of the British rule in India. His constant effort to broaden the mass base of the movement was largely successful. His efforts to mobilize and secure the support of the Muslims for the National Movement was not completely successful except for the Non-cooperation movement. His Harijan upliftment

\[280\] Sucheta Kripalani, _op. cit._, p. 50
movement along with eradicating some social evils helped in making them participate. He succeeded in emancipating the Indian women to a large extent. He assigned them certain programmes through which he involved them in political activities. It was his effort to politically mobilize these social groups which gave the National Movement a true national colour.