INDRODUCTORY

Indian National Movement was the struggle between colonialism and anti-imperialistic forces that developed in India in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These forces were developed by the untiring activities of Nationalists. It remained as a forum of debate and rather than an instrument of action. Some remarkable changes occurred with the entry of Gandhi. He entered the Indian political scene in 1917 by organizing some local movements. It was with the Rowlatt Satyagraha and Non-cooperation movement that he emerged as a national leader and also started associating with the Congress. From then onwards Gandhi became one of the most significant leaders of the National Movement and National Congress as well. Gandhi led the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-21, Civil disobedience movement of 1930, Quit India movement of 1942 against the colonial authority. These were the periods when Gandhi acted as the ultimate authority of the Congress. The period in between were the periods of political oblivion in which Gandhi confined himself to Constructive Programme and social reform activities. Indian National Movement entered its important phase during the Gandhian period.

A basic aspect of the dynamics of the national movement was the strategy it adopted in its struggle against colonial rule. This study attempts
to highlight Gandhian political strategy in the context of the National Movement. We believe that mass mobilization an important aspect of his strategy. Here we propose to take up a detailed study of the mobilization of the various sections of the society undertook by Gandhi in order to organize a mass movement against an Imperialist Government. What is intended is not an evaluation of the specific programmes of Congress or an episodical narrative of the National Movement. The objective is to evaluate the political strategy adopted and applied by Gandhi in the National Movement.

A focus on the overall strategy of the Indian National Movement has been lacking in almost all the existing studies of the movement and it might thus appear that the Indian National Movement had no clear-cut strategy. But in our study we are trying to establish that the whole movement was based on a specific strategy. Though large elements of this strategy of struggle evolved during the Moderate and Extremist phases of the movement, it was structured and completed during the Gandhian phase of the movement and in Gandhi’s political practice. So this study focuses on the period, 1917-1947. Gandhi’s contribution to Indian – and perhaps world history – is as a political leader whose political strategy and tactics and techniques of struggle moved millions into political action. It
is this aspect which has to be evaluated in detail. An effective critique of Gandhian leadership and its tactics at any specific period of time or its stand on political issue could be made only if the critique extended to and was based on an understanding of the Gandhian strategy.

The study is both interpretative and analytical. Since in this study the primary importance is given to the critical examination of Gandhian Strategy, secondary works are also of great importance. For the present work the sources which we consulted are: the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, the Private Papers that are available in National Archives and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Home political files (NAI), AICC files (NMML) and also published works and a wide range of journals.

The present work is divided in to five chapters. The first chapter is a historiographical critique of some of the major works written about Gandhi and the Indian National Movement. The chapter is divided in to four sections (a) Nationalist (b) Marxist (c) Subalternist and (d) Other Works.

The second chapter is divided into two parts. The first section deals with the nature of the Colonial state. India being a colony of Great Britain at that time it requires a detailed analysis of the nature and policies of the
British Indian Government and how it affected the Indian people and its influence on the making of the political strategy of the Indian National Congress. In it we have tried to analyze whether the colonial state is a hegemonic, semi-hegemonic or an autocratic state. The Gramscian concept of hegemony is useful for an understanding of the problem. We also analyze how power was conceived in evolving a political strategy which was based on non violence. Gandhi’s whole movement was based on the assumption that no ruler can rule without ‘the consent’ of the ruled.

Gandhi’s entry into the Indian political scene and his early struggles forms the second section of the second chapter. Gandhi was an ‘outsider’ till 1915 in the Indian political scene. He at first participated in some of the local disputes and experimented his Satyagraha in the Indian context. Through these local movements he established contact with the Indian masses. But it was by organizing Rowlatt Satyagraha he emerged as a leader of an all India stature. It was during the non cooperation movement of 1920 that he became successful in organizing a mass movement which was completely based on his idea of Satyagraha.

Gandhi mobilized hitherto immobilized social classes such as peasantry and Labourers. The Leftists also had their own programmes to organize the peasantry and labourers. Gandhi was successful in getting the
support of the peasants and labourers for his movement. He was also successful in containing the activities of Left. Even though the Leftists tried to mobilize the masses they failed in getting a mass following at the all India level. Our third chapter discusses in detail Gandhi’s programmes to organize the peasantry and labourers and his view on class conflict and his trusteeship formula. The chapter also deals with Gandhi’s interaction with the Leftists on various programmes.

Gandhi politically mobilized the social groups like Muslims, Harijans and Women. Our fourth chapter discusses Gandhi’s programmes to organize and mobilize these social groups. He was the first national leader to develop a political programme to mobilize these groups irrespective of the class divisions that existed within these groups. He became successful in getting the support of the Muslims in 1920 by incorporating the Khilafat issue in the Non cooperation movement. But once he had withdrawn the movement he steadily lost the Muslim support.

Gandhi was successful in organizing the Harijans and the women. For organizing them he depended on the Jain / Hindu tradition but at the same time he re-interpreted it. His untouchability programme helped in getting the support of the Harijans, who formed the bulk of agricultural labourers. He succeeded in making the women participate in the political
movements Women found no difficulty in participating in the non violent movements organized by Gandhi.

In conclusion we discuss the change that he had brought about in the Indian politics and his success in mobilizing the various sections of the Indian population. We also analyzed the applicability of Gandhian techniques in a liberal democratic state.

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