COLONIAL STATE AND GANDHI'S EMERGENCE AS A LEADER OF THE MASSES

Chapter- II

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Any strategy is conditioned by and in turn suited to the nature of the state within which it is applied. Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi, followed a strategy which was largely suitable to a semi-hegemonic state like colonial India. In order to contextualize Gandhian strategy an analysis of the nature of the state is required. The present chapter is divided into two sections: Section A- dealing with the nature of the Colonial state; and Section B- dealing with Gandhi’s emergence as a national leader and the strategy that he evolved based on his understanding of the nature of the British state in India.

SECTION A: COLONIAL STATE:

The British state took over the administration of India from the East India Company in 1858. Then onwards, the political system prevalent in Britain influenced the evolution of the Colonial state in India. The moves of the British in India have to be seen against the changing economic process in Britain as well as in Europe.
Changes in the economic needs of the metropolis resulted in the changing forms of colonial state and policy in India. During the initial stages the colonial state which was engaged in widening their Power in India, did not introduce any basic changes in the colony in administration other than military organization and technology.\(^1\) Changed economic scenario in Britain made the Colonial government in India adopt policies to make the colony a subordinate trading partner. They introduced some changes in the economic, social, political, administrative, cultural and ideological setting under the slogan of development and modernization. They introduced Western capitalist legal and judicial system, modern education and started talking about training the colonial people in the arts of democracy and self-government.\(^2\) It was during this stage that the State actively encouraged “some processes of reform, not merely introducing individually significant alterations of the social order, such as in the contentious abolition of Sati; but in establishing the principle that the State had the authority to do such things, a principle without precedent in Indian social history.”\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 65-66

\(^3\) Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘The Modern State in India’ in Martin Doornbos and Sudipta Kaviraj, (ed.), *Dynamics of State Formation – India and Europe Compared*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 231
With the emergence of anti-imperialist forces Colonial government intensified its control over the colony both politically and administratively. There developed a tendency to abandon social and cultural 'modernization'. In stead they assumed a neutral stance on social and cultural questions and also began to support social and cultural reaction in the name of preserving indigenous institutions. It was under the guise of political morality that they tried to inflict irreparable damage to the nationalist consolidation.

After the attainment of India by force to consolidate and perpetuate the colony, Britishers had to depend upon the support of the Indians. For which they adopted some measures to collaborate the native people. Rule of law, in a limited sense, was the first to be introduced in India upon which the colonial state itself was to be evolved. The introduction of the rule of law was to have a long term effect on colonial society. It made a deeper impression on the native mind.

The introduction of western education was another step to consolidate their position. The dissemination of colonial ideology and administrative needs were the twin objectives of the education policy of

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4 Biplab Chandra, op. cit., 1999, p. 70
the British Government.6 “Cultural domination often succeeded by making educated Indians all but British in spirit, as Macaulay and other Westernizers wanted.”7 Thus, the introduction of English education was a political necessity for them more than anything else.

The colonial state introduced representative institutions in India slowly and reluctantly. Dalhousie had created the legislative council in 1853 to ascertain official opinion in the presidencies. Later the revolt of 1857 made it clear that without knowing the public opinion it was impossible to legislate the millions. The revolt exposed the alien ness of the ruling group.8 Any law imposed upon the people without ascertaining public opinion would alienate the people.

After the revolt of 1857, the British government tried to co opt a section of the Indian people and the legislations which followed were attempts in this direction. The Indian council Act of 1861 enlarged the Governor General’s Executive Council which came to be known as Imperial Legislative Council. This council could not discuss the budget or a financial measure or any other important bill without the previous

6 Ibid., p. 28
7 Richard G. Fox, Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture, Beacon Press, Boston, 1989, pp. 270-71
8 Partha Chatterjee, The Nation And Its Fragments – Colonial And Post Colonial Histories, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p.18
approval of the Government. Even though the Government decided to increase the Indian members in the council to represent the view of the natives it did not serve even this purpose. The majority of the Indian nominees to the Council did not represent the Indian people or the emerging nationalist opinion.⁹

The Act of 1876 empowered local governments to introduce the elective system in the constitution of a municipality if a majority of the rate payers of that municipality demanded it. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 introduced representative elements in the councils, though the Government was careful to maintain official majorities. The members were given the right to discuss the budget but they could neither vote on it nor move a motion to amend it.¹⁰

Apart from the strong military the colonial State depended much upon their equally strong bureaucracy. The administration of Colonial State was carried on by the colonial bureaucracy. This bureaucracy was responsible to the British people through their Parliament.¹¹ It was the

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 115
¹¹ Bhagwan Joshi, *op. cit.*, p.36
British who created a ‘Weberian bureaucracy’ in India. At the apex of the hierarchy of the colonial polity was the viceroy. Below him were the members of a bureaucratic corporation, resting upon the principles of meritocracy, who were based in territorial units, called districts and sub-districts. A pre-colonial bureaucracy of indigenous origin was located at the lower most rung of the administrative apparatus. Rather than by virtue of merit and skills which inform a modern bureaucracy, the selection of the members of these strata was based on their connection and local influence.

The British never employed the western liberalism in its full sense nor did they depend completely on the authoritarian policy while administering India. The colonial policy of the British followed “a tortuous middle course between the farsighted ‘liberal experiment’ and the unimaginative ‘conservative adventure’.

However this was not a constant, unchanging policy. The colonial government changed its policies according to the changing context. This explains the marked difference in the policies of the colonial rule after the

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13 Ibid., p. 402
14 Ibid., p. 402-403.
15 Bhagwan Josh, op. cit., p. 31
revolt of 1857 and also after the emergence of the organized anti-imperialist movement. The policy was then to find out ways to spoil the unity among the colonial people. The Government authorities tried to break the emerging national unity in the colony and started promoting segmentation of colonial society into all kinds of social groups, including social classes and set them against each other.\(^{16}\) They also put forward the theory that unity is possible only under the colonial state.\(^{17}\) This was designed to make the colonial rule a permanent one.

Late in the Eighteenth and throughout the Nineteenth century, in Britain and in India, an Orientalist image of India evolved. Orientalism categorized India as passive, otherworldly, tradition-ridden or superstitious, caste-dominated, morally degraded, unfree and despotic, and therefore weak, backward, and unchanging. It justified British rule in India.\(^{18}\)

Christian Missionaries like Alexander Duff, historians like James Mill, Educationists and administrators like Macaulay, writers like Charles Grant etc. contributed to the creation of an Oriental stereotype through their writings and policy approaches. Partha Chatterjee rightly remarks

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\(^{16}\) Bipan Chandra, *Essays ...,* p. 71

\(^{17}\) *Ibid.*, p. 71

\(^{18}\) Richard G. Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 92
that “Orientalism created the Oriental, it was a body of knowledge in which the Oriental was ‘contained and represented by dominating frameworks’ and Western power over the Orient was given the ‘status of scientific truth.’ Thus, Orientalism was a ‘kind of western projection on to and will to govern over the Orient’.¹⁹

The western educated Indians assimilated the Oriental stereotype created by colonial masters. Social reformers and early Indian nationalists could not come out of this stereotype completely. The Britishers became successful in creating Orientalist hegemony.

Concept of power:

In a general sense power means the capacity to dominate and control. Power is very rarely limited to the pure exercise of brute force. Johan Galtung identifies three ways in which power can work. Normative power, based on persuasion requires an element of submissiveness. Remunerative power, based on bargaining requires some kind of dependency. And punitive power, based on force requires an element of fear.²⁰

¹⁹ Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World – A Derivative Discourse, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p. 36
²⁰ Robert J. Burrowes, The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense – A Gandhian Approach,
The consent theory of power identifies people as the ultimate source of all power and highlights the notion that elites are dependent on the cooperation of the people they dominate.\(^{21}\) The three major criticisms of the consent theory are:\(^{22}\)

1. Though elites are always dependent, they are not necessarily dependent on the cooperation of the people they actually oppress or exploit.
2. The consent theory of power fails to adequately consider the cultural dimension.
3. It pays inadequate attention to social structures.

As the consent theory of power provides incomplete and inadequate explanation of power the consent theory of power should be complemented by insights derived from the structural theory.\(^{23}\)

According to the structural theory, social structures and systems are regarded as by products of certain types of social interactions that have become so regular and entrenched that they have acquired a life of their own. First, it highlights the fact that while individual choices exists in


\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 87

\(^{22}\) Ibid., pp. 87-91

\(^{23}\) Ibid., pp. 90 - 91
theory, in practice tradition, social process and social structures limit the capacity for individual decision making. This is because while there might be no overt conflict and no obvious parties, it is structures and systems rather than individual choices that determine social outcome.\(^{24}\)

According to structuralists “a structure such as patriarchy or capitalism is a system of power in itself. And these structures are sustained by at least three factors: the support of the national elites, the acceptance of elite hegemony by most of society, and the support of other structures including the coercive power of the state.”\(^{25}\)

Gramsci made a genuinely original contribution in his treatment of the relationship between 'structure' and 'superstructure'. Gramsci was a Marxist in seeing the mode of production (the 'structure') as the ultimately determining force in society. But more consistently than any other Marxist thinker, Gramsci shifted the focus of Marxist practice into the realm of the 'superstructure'. The superstructure is the world of ideologies, culture, religion and politics.\(^{26}\)

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 91
\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 93
According to Gramsci there are two major super structural "levels": "the one that can be called "civil society", that is the ensemble of organism commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or "the state". These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the state and "juridical" government.  

The dominant group, because of its position and function in the world of production, enjoys the spontaneous consent of the great masses of the population. The state exercises its coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. Thus Gramsci defined the state as a mixture of coercion and hegemony. A ruling class enjoys hegemony if it is capable of exercising moral and political leadership, thereby achieving the consent of the masses.  

Gramsci maintains that "Hegemony pre supposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which

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28 Ibid., p. 12  
29 Ibid., p. 12  
hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed - in other words, the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic corporate kind".  

Bipan Chandra and Bhagwan Josh sought to apply the Gramscian concept of hegemony in the Indian context. Bipan Chandra considers the nature of British State as semi- -hegemonic and legal authoritarian.

Even though the colonial state was established by force, it was based not just on force but on certain civil institutions such as elected assemblies, local government institutions, courts, schools and colleges and above all on the rule of law. Even while suppressing popular opposition; it observed certain rules of law and codes of administration. Bipan Chandra considers the colonial state as a semi- -hegemonic state on the basis that the colonial state relied very heavily for the acquiescence of the Indian people in their rule on two notions, (1) that the foreign rulers were benevolent and just, (2) that the colonial rulers were invincible.

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31 Gramsci, op. cit., p.161
33 Bipan Chandra, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 506
Bhagwan Josh considers the colonial state as a hegemonic state—information. This was a continuous process: "from the end of the nineteenth century onwards this state had begun to seek its legitimacy partly from this qualitatively new type of consent while still combining within it old forms of loyalty and obedience.\(^{35}\)

The colonial India in the nineteenth century enjoyed limited civil liberties such as the freedom of press and opinion. A large number of newspapers constituted a formidable opposition to the colonial state. And the people could hold mass meetings to express grievances and criticize the policy of the government.\(^{36}\)

The working class in India enjoyed some elementary trade union rights. Under the India Trade Union Act of 1926 the colonial authority recognized the right of the working class to form a registered trade Union. By enacting Labour laws the Government tried to keep working class movements within the constitutional bounds and attempted to exercise hegemony over the working class.\(^{37}\)

\(^{35}\) *Ibid.*, p. 14. However, depending on the situation, the government sought to curtail these liberties. Prohibitory orders became common during periods of active struggle.


\(^{37}\) *Ibid.*, p. 15
"The hegemony of the colonial state manifested itself in many forms such as passive acquiescence, apathy, submissiveness, resignation and unquestioned obedience to the state apparatus". Mass mobilization could, however, change this. The non-cooperation movement eroded "the omnipresence of the legal and educational institutions of the British and to some extent lessened the feeling of awe towards Government and authority." Political leaders in their campaigns tried to lessen the feeling of awe towards Governmental authority. The police was often ridiculed.

Ranajit Guha does not agree with the views of Bipan Chandra and Bhagwan Josh. According to Guha the metropolitan state was hegemonic in character; where as the colonial state was non-hegemonic. In metropolis the moment of persuasion outweighed that of coercion but in the colonial state that existed in India persuasion was out weighed by coercion. He considers the nature of the colonial state as autocratic. Since

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38 Ibid., p. 17
39 Ibid., p. 19
40 There are several instances of such incidents mentioned in K.N. Panikkar's, Against the Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprising in Malabar, 1836-1921, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001. For such incidents during the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar see Moyarath Sankaran, Ente Jeevita Katha (Mal.) Kozhikkode, 1966, p.286 and Home Political Department, F.No.18/VI, 1930, National Archives of India.
colonial state was non hegemonic, it was not possible for the state to assimilate the civil society of the colonized to itself.\textsuperscript{41}

In Guha's work, "Hegemony stands for a condition of Dominance (D) such that, in the organic composition D, Persuasion (P) outweighs coercion (C)"\textsuperscript{42} according to him there can be no colonialism without coercion, no subjection of an entire people in its own homeland by foreigners without the explicit use of force.\textsuperscript{43}

British established power initially by act of conquest. But as colonialism graduated to a more systematic, imperial career, the exclusive reliance on the sword gave way to an orderly control in which force had to learn to live with institutions and ideologies designed to generate consent. The idiom of conquest was replaced by the idiom of Order.\textsuperscript{44}

In the name of Order the colonial bureaucracy which was armed with powers which could often muzzle free speech and censor the press, curbed the individual freedom of movement, and deny the right of assembly to the people. Order was thus enforced by the coercive

\textsuperscript{41} Ranjit Guha, \textit{Dominance Without Hegemony – History and Power in Colonial India}, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, p. XII.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 23.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 24.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pp. 24-25.
apparatus of the state whereas it had little to do with the state in Western Europe.\textsuperscript{45}

Guha further stated that mobilization against the imperialist authority was the most visible and unquestionable evidence of the fact that the masses had transferred their allegiance from the raj to the nationalist leadership and its party - the India National Congress. The question of hegemony was at the core of the campaigns of Swadeshi movement and Non cooperation movement.\textsuperscript{46} To withdraw the cooperation from the raj was to demonstrate that it did not rule by consent. Thus mobilization was another name for popular consent, for hegemony against an autocratic government which had reduced them to a second-class citizen in their own land.\textsuperscript{47}

\textit{Hind Swaraj} written by Gandhi in 1909 reflects his understanding of the British domination of India. In the seventh chapter titled 'Why was India Lost? He explains the reasons for the sub-ordination of Indians to a colonial power. He wrote "The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them. Let us now see whether these propositions can be

\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 25
\textsuperscript{46}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{47}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 102
sustained. They came to our country originally for purposes of trade..... In order to become rich all at once we welcomed the Company’s officers with open arms. We assisted them.” He further elaborated the point thus:

“When our Princes fought among themselves, they sought the assistance of Company Bahadur. That corporation was versed alike in commerce and war. It was unhampered by questions of morality. Its object was to increase its commerce and to make money. It accepted our assistance, and increased the number of its warehouses. To protect the latter it employed an army which was utilized by us also. Is it not then useless to blame the English for what we did at that time? The Hindus and the Mahomedans were at daggers drawn. This, too, gave the Company its opportunity and thus we created the circumstances that gave the Company its control over India. Hence it is truer to say that we gave India to the English than that India was lost.”

Gandhi’s understanding of the nature of British imperialism and economic exploitation of the colony were clearly expressed in Hind

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Swaraj. In his own words: "Napoleon is said to have described the English as a nation of shop-keepers. It is a fitting description. They hold whatever dominions they have for the sake of their commerce. Their army and their navy are intended to protect it......It is related that someone asked the late President Kruger whether there was gold in the moon. He replied that it was highly unlikely because, if there were, the English would have annexed it. Many problems can be solved by remembering that money is their God......it is proved that the English entered India for the purposes of trade. They remain in it for the same purpose and......They wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods. That they cannot do so is true, but the blame will not be theirs. They will leave no stone unturned to reach the goal."50

The context in which Gandhi wrote Hind Swaraj was explained by Anthony J. Parel and Richard Fox. In the introduction to Hind Swaraj he traces the intellectual, historical, political, social and geographical background of the book. After the industrial revolution the world was divided into the industrialized and non-industrialized, or the 'civilized' and the 'non-civilized', parts.51

50 Ibid., pp. 35-36
Gandhi, while he was in London, read G.K. Chesterton’s diatribe in the *Illustrated London News* dated 18th September, 1909. According to Chesterton Indian nationalists were “a small and decultured group that existed in a false, shadowed world – shadowed because they had been some what enlightened by British education and civilization, yet they were still partly darkened by India’s obscure Oriental traditions”\(^{52}\) Chesterton argued, how could the nationalism of Indians be authentic when “all they wished for was their own English style parliament, their English-style elections, and their own English – style liberties.”\(^{53}\)

So it was the duty of the British to reform the decultured. Thus James Fitzjames Stephen, a law member of the Viceroy’s council, argued that English had a civilizing mission. This was because ‘English in India are the representative of a belligerent civilization’ and the introduction of such a civilization into India was ‘the great and characteristic task’ of Britain in India.\(^{54}\)

It was against the backdrop of such arguments of Chesterton and Stephen’s that Gandhi developed his critique of modern civilization.

\(^{52}\) Richard G. Fox, *op. cit.*, p.84, CW MG, Vol.10, p. 107
\(^{53}\) *Ibid.*, p. 84
\(^{54}\) Anthony J. Parel, *op. cit.*, p. xx
Gandhi, in his *Hind Swaraj*, condemned Indian imitations of the West. He on the one hand "broadened the condemnation into a fervid rejection of modern civilization" and on the other "used it as an acclamation of traditional India – and thereby as an apology for contemporary India's "backwardness". But Gandhi's attack was limited to certain unhealthy tendencies in modern western civilization. He welcomed a number of its contributions – civil liberty, equality rights, prospects for improving the economic conditions of life, liberation of women from tradition and religious toleration. His condemnation of modern civilization was a fundamental critique of the entire edifice of bourgeois society. The critique of the western civilization was a total moral critique of the fundamental aspects of civil society.

Gandhi thoroughly criticized all the aspects of modernity. He criticized the democratic institutions and the modern state apparatus. Partha Chatterjee argues that the ideal conception of *Ramarajya* encapsulates the critique of all that is morally reprehensible in the economic and political organization of civil society. Gandhi wanted to

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55 Richard G. Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 85
56 Anthony J. Parel, *op. cit.*, p. xlvii
58 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist ...*, p. 90
confront an activist state as well as other locations of power in civil society. His concerns about civil society often parallel the republican reading of civil society. “While recognizing that state can become a major obstacle to liberty, strong republicans appreciate that the institutions of civil society can also deny liberty to citizens. For this reason, strong republicans, unlike most liberals, pay considerable attention to the power that resides in civil society.”  

Colonial policy depended on the nature of politics and economy in the Metropolis as well as the emerging trends in the colony. Its interest was to prolong its rule as long as possible for which the colonial masters changed their policy from time to time depending on the nature of exploitation.

Colonial state in India cannot be considered as autocratic or authoritative in nature nor as hegemonic in character. The western models that British introduced in India included the mechanisms of civil society. The public meetings, press campaigns against the government, interview with the government officials etc. were allowed in colonial India. The existence of the Indian National Congress, which organized mass mobilizations against government on such a wide scale shows that the

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British state was not purely autocratic or authoritative state. The rule of law which the British government established in India was in a limited sense when compared to that of a modern state. The colonial ideology behind the introduction of rule of law and education was not basically for the improvement or modernization of Indian society. Instead it was through which they tried to get support of a section of the people to their rule.

In the following section we argue that Gandhi’s political programme was designed to erode British notions of legitimacy and undermine the consent Indians had given to the British government.

SECTION B: GANDHI'S EMERGENCE AS A NATIONAL LEADER

The post World War-I period witnessed the growth of national movement into a widespread mass movement. Many factors contributed to this development. One of them was the advent of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who became the undisputed leader of the national movement by 1920 and remained so until independence was won in 1947.

It was in 1915 that Gandhi came back to India from South Africa. Born on 2nd October 1869 at Porbandar in Gujarat, Gandhi, after getting legal education from Britain, had gone to South Africa to practice law.
But there he was agitated by the gross injustice, racial discrimination and degradation that the emigrant Indians had to suffer under the European colonial rulers. Gandhi soon became the leader of a long struggle against these conditions. During 1894-1914 Gandhi was engaged in a heroic struggle against the ‘racist’ authorities of South Africa.

Ideas of Satyagraha:

It was during his struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa that Gandhi evolved in the noted agitational method of ‘passive resistance’, soon refined as ‘Satyagraha’ (firmness in a truthful cause).\(^{62}\) Gandhi’s introduction to western thought began in 1888 with his legal studies in London.\(^{63}\) His life in England helped him in evolving his methods. There he came into contact with the works of the eminent thinkers of the west, (the works of Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin). Even though these scholars had influenced Gandhi’s mind it was his childhood experiences and Hindu tradition which gave him a foundation to develop it as a political philosophy. According to A.L. Basham the fundamental concept of Gandhi’s philosophy owes nothing to western sources. It was

\(^{62}\) Passive Revolution was seen as a weapon of the weak and characterized by hatred and so Gandhi asked the readers of his *Indian Opinion* to suggest a single word. The best entry was Sadagraha which Gandhi altered to Satyagraha. B.R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, Delhi, 1958, p. 95, and *CWG*, Vol.16, p. 10

\(^{63}\) Anthony Parel, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiii
developed from the Hindu tradition in which he was brought up.\textsuperscript{64} Gandhi's non-violence is an exclusion of the classical Hindu principle of\textit{ahimsa} which is also an important principle of both Jainism and Buddhism.\textsuperscript{65} Even though 'passive resistance' owe much to western influence upon him, his Satyagraha 'was in no way un-Indian.'\textsuperscript{66} But it is not good to undermine the influences of western ideas on him. It was the contact with the west which enabled him to enter into political field. "it is possible that if he never read the Gospels, Tolstoy, Ruskin, and much western literature, Gandhi would not have entered politics at all, or, if he had done so, would have devised techniques and policies different from those which he actually did devise."\textsuperscript{67}

Gandhi’s Satyagraha was based on truth and non-violence and for that reason an ideal Satyagrahi was to be truthful and peaceful. But at the same time he would not submit to what he considered wrong. He would accept sufferings willingly in the course of struggle against the wrongdoer. But even while resisting evil, he would not hate the evildoer. To Gandhi non-violence was not a weapon of the weak and the coward.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 32
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 39
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 42
Only the strong and the brave could practice it. He would be utterly fearless. Even violence was preferable to cowardice.

Gandhi would not separate thought from practice, belief from action. His truth and non-violence were meant for daily living and not merely for high-sounding speeches and writings. Gandhi’s non-violence and Satyagraha demonstrated considerable originality. It was Gandhi’s conviction that suffering can be used creatively for the emancipation of the people. Even if Satyagrahi was betrayed by the adversary, the former had to continue to repose his trust in the latter as the object was not to destroy but to win over the enemy.

Gandhi’s Satyagraha was both a political technique to be used against British Colonialism and a moral philosophy that claimed his utopian vision.68 His philosophy of Satyagraha advocated "a ceaseless activism by the aggrieved individuals who in foro conscientiae were convinced about the fact that those manning the authoritative positions in the political system violated certain fundamental principles of just governance and acted in an unrighteous manner when they perpetuated exploitation and injustice."69

68 Richard G. Fox, op. cit., p. 7
Gandhi and his idea of Non-violent struggle:

The central question of Gandhian strategy was how to organize mass action against the colonial government. The basic assumptions on which Gandhian strategy depended were that individuals are the ultimate source of power, no government can rule without the consent of the ruled and modern state intruded into basics which were once considered private. Gandhi’s struggle against the British was a fight against power. According to Burrowes Gandhi’s struggle in India was based on his understanding that “Illegitimate power can work only in certain circumstances. Normative power (appeals to values or ideas) works because people are “empty”, remunerative power (incentives and rewards) works because people are dependent, and punitive power (the threat or use of force) works because people are afraid.”

For its effectiveness state depends on the ability to elicit other forms of power to support its own. Gandhian strategy was designed to erode the legitimacy of British rule in India by the deepening of the political consciousness and the widening of the mass base of the national movement. When individuals recognize their power and use it

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*Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 17, No. 1, April-June, 1995, p. 46

70 Robert J. Burrowes, *op. cit.*, p. 117
constructively to engage in non-violent resistance against an evil state, the power of state would be reduced. The way to undermine the power of state is to organize corporate resistance “by those constituencies on which it actually depends.”\(^7\) It is our contention that Gandhi developed a political programme in which we can see the basic elements of the consent theory and structural theory of power. He employed these two theories of power to formulate a non-violent strategy against the colonial state.

The Non Cooperation Movement of 1920 was aimed at withdrawing the consent which a government obtained from its subjects. Non – cooperation movement involves the deliberate withdrawal of cooperation with the state by organizing strikes, boycotts, no-tax campaigns, boycott of British courts, legislative bodies and elections. Political non – cooperation includes acts of civil disobedience – the deliberate, open, and peaceful violation of particular laws, regulations, or instructions that are believed to be morally objectionable or unreasonable.\(^7\) Non cooperation with the government results in the loss of prestige of the government. Thus the government lost its prestige during the non-violent non-cooperation of 1920, which it never regained.

\(^7\) *Ibid.*, p. 96
\(^7\) *Ibid.*, p. 98
"Titles, law-courts, educational institutions no longer inspire the awe they did in 1920."\(^{73}\)

Gandhi offered nonviolence as the means to make non cooperation effective against the British rule in India. He chose non-violence not only for ethical reasons but also for its practical utility. In a letter to Viceroy Baron Chelmsford he wrote "In European countries condonation of such grievous wrongs as the Khilafat and the Panjab would have resulted in a bloody revolution by the people.....But half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance and the other half is unwilling to do so".\(^{74}\) Only a non-violent movement could get the support of the masses. Large scale mass participation on the lines of non violence alone can make non cooperation successful. Indian National Congress' acceptance of his non-violent technique was not a moral or religious act but a political decision because Gandhi offered a course of action which was seen to be practical and effective.

Governments find it difficult to take action against the non violent movements. "Repression against non-violent resisters can alienate various groups further so that it actually weakens the opponents and strengthens

\(^{73}\) Gandhi, *CWMG*, Vol.40, p. 349  
\(^{74}\) *Home Political Collection Deposit*, No.38, National Archives of India, (Hereafter NAI)
the nonviolent struggle group.” The government at first decided not to take any action against Gandhi while the non-cooperation movement of 1920 was going on. George Lowndes, a British Officer, wrote on 5/8/1920 that “To take any legal steps against him (Gandhi) now would be merely playing into his hands. If we leave him alone the non-co-operation movement and with it his personal influence will die of inanition. I should however rather like to get our reasons into the public press and to make it known that we no longer regard him as worth powder and shot. It might be put rather neatly, I think, the Government now refuse to “co-operate” with the Mahatma!” Later during the Salt March of 1930 also the government decided not to take any action against the march so long as it was conducted peacefully. “So long as it is conducted peacefully there is no provision of law which permits prohibition of the March.” But the government was forced to change its policy and resort to repression once it found that its authority was getting eroded.

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76 Home Department, Collection Deposit No. 38, NAI
77 Telegram dated 8th March, 1930 from Bombay Special, Bombay to Home Department, New Delhi. Home Political, 1930, F. No. 213, NAI
Gandhi prepared a comprehensive plan of action before starting a movement. He chose particular and inclusive issues.\textsuperscript{79} Gandhi chose immediate issues to start a movement. Except Quit India movement, which was a fight to the finish, no other movement had its declared aim as complete independence or Swaraj. He chose "petty and collateral issue of Rowlatt Bills for the inauguration of Satyagraha, although there was before India the mammoth issue of Self-Government......in 1920 when the Punjab tragedy and the Khilaphat wrong were made by him the issue on which to inaugurate the Non-co-operation movement, - not Swaraj."\textsuperscript{80}

A movement too long prolonged will be demoralizing for the participants because of loss of rest, fatigue, suffering etc. Indian National Movement was a prolonged movement. Gandhi launched movements only when he was convinced that masses would enthusiastically participate in it. Knowing the limitations of the masses he called off the movements when ever it was at its low ebb. He kept the masses active through his constructive programme. His constructive programme, which was intended to restructure the social and economic life of all Indians, was a vital part of his strategy. It was designed to satisfy the needs of each

\textsuperscript{79} The issue of salt manufacture is a good example.
individual member of society and was centrally concerned with the needs of self esteem, security and justice. It was as attempt to strengthen Indian society socially and economically without depending on British power. "The constant internal strengthening of Indian society and its institutions was seen by Gandhi as leading to the inevitable end of British rule."81 His constructive programme also enabled the participation of women especially middle class women in the national movement.

Gandhi’s fasts could also be considered as a part of his strategy. Colonial government was of the opinion that Gandhi’s fasts were for political ends and in order to gain prestige.82 With the exception of his first fast during the Ahmedabad Mill Strike in 1918, his each fast coincided with serious internal crisis in Congress, usually over dissensions regarding policy of violence or non-violence, when Gandhi’s leadership was seriously threatened; it resulted in immense increase in popularity and prestige of Gandhi at time when this was most needed by him; enabled him to re-establish his personal ascendancy.

81 Gene Sharp, Gandhias a Political Strategist: With Essays on Ethics and Politics, Porter Sargent Publishers, Boston, 1979, p. 181
82 Telegram dated 31st July, 1942, from Governor General (Home Department) New Delhi to Secretary of State for India, London, Home Political(1)1942 F.No.19/2, NAI
Gramsci equated Gandhian method of struggle to that of war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement, and at other underground warfare. But Gandhi's movement cannot be considered as equal to war of movement because he never advocated a frontal attack on the state; and also to that of underground warfare. Gramsci who was in prison at that time could not fully understand the nature of the movements that Gandhi organized in India. While applying Gramscian concepts one has to be selective: Gramsci was dealing with a fascist state.

Gandhi developed the agitational method of Satyagraha in South Africa and experimented with the elements of Satyagraha in his initial Indian campaigns from 1916 to 1919. Through his experiments he tried to conform it to the Indian situation. Indian national movement witnessed a practical strategy in his Satyagraha.

We shall now take each of these movements for a brief discussion.

**Early Political Activities: Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kaira Satyagrahas**

It was with valuable experience of struggle that Gandhi came back to India keen to serve his country. Gandhi's entry into Indian politics

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83 Gramsci, *op. cit.*, p. 229
occurred in 1917 and 1918 when he became involved in three local disputes: With peasants against landlords in Champaran (Bihar), farmers against revenue officials in Kaira (Gujarat), and mill-workers against their employers in Ahmedabad (Gujarat). Such disputes would have been considered outside the normal range of political activity, in areas notorious for their backwardness in the politics of nationalism; but Gandhi chose to deploy his technique of Satyagraha in each case, and by so doing made his debut as an influential actor on the Indian political stage.

Champaran Satyagraha:

In 1916 he found a Satyagraha Ashram on the banks of Sabarmati River near Ahmedabad where his followers were to learn and practice ideals of truth and non-violence. Gandhi’s first great experiment in Satyagraha came in 1917 in Champaran, a district of Bihar. Champaran was in fact Gandhi’s least anticipated Satyagraha. In 1915 he had not expected to use this weapon for at least five years, and even early in 1917 he knew nothing about Champaran, not even its name or geographical position, let alone the economics of Indigo planting.84

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The European planters had cruelly oppressed the peasants on the indigo plantations in Champaran. Gandhi toured the area and made enquiries into the conditions of the peasants defying the official orders against his entry there. Ultimately the Government was forced to reduce the disabilities of the peasants. Even though Gandhi considered the success was limited he succeeded in making the government to appoint an enquiry committee to deal with peasant distress. In Gandhi’s political career Champaran Satyagraha was of immense significance. “Before 1917 his reaction to Indian problems had been largely theoretical, and it was these Bihar raiyats who brought him to grips with India’s people and government. By championing them Gandhi began to clothe with flesh and blood the figure which had hitherto been only a shadowy contender in the arena of Indian Public Life. Even after entering into the political he did not try to link their struggle with conventional politics and not align with any political group. Unlike his political activities in South Africa Gandhi restricted the uses of press as well as his sources of finance. Even though Gandhi had not in 1917 moved entirely beyond the confines of regional loyalties, Champaran did give him an all India public

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85 Ibid., p. 73
86 Ibid., p. 75
It was here for the first time in India he practiced Civil disobedience of the law. His explanatory statement in the magistrate’s court caused some sensation in the country.88

**Kaira Satyagraha:**

The scene of Gandhi’s second Indian Satyagraha was the Gujarat district of Kaira. The Kaira campaign was chiefly directed against the

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87 Ibid., p. 79
88 P. Spratt, *Gandhism: An Analysis*, Huxley Press, Madras, 1939, p. 206. Gandhi who appeared before the District Magistrate read the statement: “With the permission of the Court, I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. In my humble opinion, it is a question of difference of opinion between the local administration and my self. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation’ to come and help the ryots, who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the administration and the planters. I have no other motive and I cannot believe that my coming here can in any way disturb the public peace or cause of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The administration, however, have thought differently. I fully appreciate their difficulty, and I admit too, that they can only proceed upon information they receive. As a law abiding citizen, my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I could not, therefore, voluntarily retire. Amid this conflict of duty, I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the administration.

I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding in the public life of India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting examples. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience. I have ventured to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience of the higher law of our being—the voice of conscience. *The Leader, 22-4-1917, CWMG, Vol.15*, pp. 345-346
Government. In the spring of 1918 crop failures and drought brought misery to the peasants of Kaira in Gujarat. Gandhi led a peasant struggle against the collection of land revenue when the crops had failed.

Home Rule League was very active in Gujarat. Gandhi relied upon the foundation made by the Home Rule League to start his activities there. He worked among the poor illiterate peasants and brought politics to people who were not experienced it before. His appeal was not that of the Presidency Politician, just as his aims differed from theirs: the politics he preached were moulded to suit the real interests of the people in the streets and villages, as his Satyagrahas of 1918 showed.\(^8\) It was during this movement that peasants came to understand that “it was their right to question Government’s authority to tax them, that the officials were not their masters but their servants, that therefore they should shed all fear of officials and stand erect in defiance of coercion, intimidation and worse.”\(^9\) It was here that the mass Satyagraha was used for the first time in India. It gave the idea that “Satyagraha cannot be practiced successfully by people without training and some familiarity with its principles.”\(^1\)

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\(^8\) Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 93

\(^9\) Pattabhi Sittaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 141

\(^1\) P. Spratt, *op. cit.*, p. 207
The work he had done in Gujarat during Kaira Satyagraha helped him a lot in later years. He had, however, clearly secured an established position of local leadership by the time of the Kaira Satyagraha. Although Satyagraha failed in Kaira, in that it did not procure the objects for which it had been initiated, it showed its true colours as a very powerful weapon because it was so simple and versatile. Kaira hammered home the lesson of Champaran that Satyagraha could be used in virtually any situation of conflict, by literate and illiterate persons. It was a weapon for all seasons, and in Gandhi’s hands, directed by his personal ideology; it gave him the edge over conventional politicians with their techniques of petitions, public speeches and debates, which were more suitable for the educated and not designed to bring in the masses.

Ahmedabad Mill Strike:

Satyagraha in Gujarat in 1918 was not continued to Kaira. Gandhi organized a similar campaign in Ahmedabad, which received less publicity because it was directed against Indian Employers, not
government officials. In contrast to Kaira and Champaran, Ahmedabad was an urban center.

In 1918 workers strike started demanding the increase in wages. Gandhiji requested the mill owners to refer the wage dispute to arbitration. When they refused to do so, Gandhi resorted to a fast to pressurize the owners. He managed to settle the matter after 21 days of strike. The employers agreed to increase 35% in the wages of employees.93

Even though this Satyagraha did not involve conflict with the government, it was a highly significant one in Gandhi's Political development. In the realm of political technique this was Gandhi's first fast intended to influence public events, and was the forerunner of his hunger - strike in all-India politics.

With these three movements Gandhi entered Indian Politics without the support of any particular political party or faction within a party. He did not represent any region, any religious group or caste. He was, like in South Africa, above such affiliations. Both Champaran & Kaira were rural areas and for that reason politically inactive. He worked among them and

93 CWMG, Vol.16, pp. 348-349
gave the rural people a new political weapon, i.e., Satyagraha. These Satyagrahas elevated Gandhi as a leader who could represent the ideas of the poor in the society. By mid-1918 Gandhi was walking on the verges of institutional politics, still isolated from the politicians, though widely known as a powerful and original leader of people.

Gandhi’s Emergence As A Revolutionary Politician:

It was the Rowlatt Act which brought Gandhi into active political movement of all India dimension. During the First World War Gandhi had shown intense loyalty towards the British and even urged Indian to join the British Army. This earned him the epithet “recruiting sergeant of the Government.” But the post war events greatly disillusioned Gandhi. “The First World War transformed Gandhi into a political leader in his native land. If India had not felt the repercussions of the European conflict it is possible that Gandhi would have remained a public worker in the small world of the district and the market town, only occasionally

94 Gandhi’s eagerness to secure Swaraj through recruitment may be seen from the fact that he even amended the doctrine of non-violence temporarily to meet the situation. Somewhat disillusioned by the Kheda Satyagraha, in which it had been brought home to him that people only adopted Satyagraha because they were too cowardly to resort to violence, he now laid that greatest stress on courage and manliness.....He reconciled his new attitude with the concept of non-violence by convincing himself that India must first regain courage and commit violence in order to appreciate the beauty of non-violence. This attitude, however, lasted only as long as the recruitment campaign. P.H.M. Van Den Dungen, ‘Gandhi in 1919: Loyalist or Rebel?’, in R. Kumar edited., op. cit., p. 43
participating in the activities of the political nation. But the war was a watershed in Gandhi's own career and in Indian politics.95

The announced Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were not in tune with the aspirations of the country. The reforms had not contemplated the principle of 'self-determination' which the Allied Power had promised to the subjugated peoples after the war. While the government tried to appease the people, it was equally determined to suppress the nationalists who would reject the official reforms. Accordingly in February 1919 the Government of India passed the Rowlatt Act96 which empowered the Government to arrest and imprison any person without judicial trial and conviction.

The Rowlatt Act was a shock to Indians. The people who were expecting more democratic measures from the Government now felt humiliated. A powerful agitation arose against the Rowlatt Act under the leadership of Gandhi. He decided to meet the situation with a campaign of Satyagraha. For this purpose Gandhi had toured the country extensively

95 Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 123
96 The Rowlatt Act was designed to equip the Government of India with the authority to deal with the outbreaks of revolutionary crime which characterized the opening decades of the twentieth century and which were initiated by terrorist groups in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab in a bid to undermine the fabric of political society in India. R. Kumar in his introduction, *op. cit.*, p. 1
and was received with great respect everywhere. The Rowlatt Satyagraha was the first nation-wide mass movement led by Gandhi. “The launching of Rowlatt Satyagraha was an act of faith rather than an act of calculation, for although Gandhi had a firm belief in the righteousness of his cause, he had no idea how the people of India would respond to his initiative”. When he issued a call for a hartal (closing of shops) on the 6th he was not occupying any prominent place in India politics and did not enjoy the support of any political Organization or any powerful social interest. This Satyagraha was the first country wide agitation to be launched against the British government, and it not only transformed the masses, but it also paved the way for Gandhi’s emergence as a dominant figure in Indian Politics. It was during this Satyagraha that “his ability to command the allegiance of the masses was well demonstrated, and he showed both how effective Satyagraha might be as a mean of attacking the Government, and how safe order and peace were in his hands.”

Gandhi’s loyalty to the British government came to an end with the Rowlatt Satyagraha. Usually historians considered Rowlatt Act as something which inspired Gandhi almost overnight to adopt an ant-British

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97 Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op. cit., p.160
98 R. Kumar, op. cit., p. 3
99 Ibid., p. 4
100 P. Spratt, op. cit., p. 244
stance. According to Van Den Dugan Gandhi’s alienation from the British Raj started as early as 1905.\textsuperscript{101} The altered climate of politics after the Great War, and the enactment of the Rowlett Act in 1919, combined to create a situation which encouraged Gandhi to transform his ideas into political action. “It was the war mentality of the Government of India which precipitated the Satyagraha of 1919. Gandhi had been ready since at least 1909.”\textsuperscript{102}

People enthusiastically responded to the call of Gandhi to observe a countrywide hartal on 6\textsuperscript{th}. “The hartal was a way of popularizing Gandhi’s campaign against the injustice.”\textsuperscript{103} The entire country was politically electrified. Earlier works on Gandhi in the regional level paid rich dividends to Gandhi during the Rowlatt Satyagraha. According to H.F. Owan Gandhi depended heavily on the Home Rule League set up by Tilak and Annie Besant; and further more Gandhi created a Satyagraha Sabha for this purpose; and he also helped to give birth to the Khilafat

\textsuperscript{101} The most decisive change in Gandhi’s political outlook occurred between about mid 1905 and the end of 1909. Gandhi developed his own political technique of political action during these years. Victory to Japan in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 and the agitation against the partition of Bengal delighted Gandhi. In the closing months of 1905 and in the early months of 1906 the Bengal agitation clearly played a significant role in bringing Gandhi’s nationalist aspiration in the forefront. P.H.M. Van Den Dungen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 51

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 63

Moreover D.E. Baker, K.L. Gillion, J. Masselos, D.W. Ferrell and R. Kumar say that people reacted actively because of their regional discontents. The country wide hartal resulted in the unprecedented fraternization of Hindus and Muslim and the general excitement among the masses alarmed the British. The Government tried to suppress the mass agitation by arrests, lathi-charge the firing. The chain of reactions created by the anti-Rowlett Act agitation culminated in the Amritsar Tragedy and the consequent widespread disorder in the country. All this pushed Gandhi to the political stage of India. "The response to Gandhi's call for a Satyagraha against the Rowlett Act was heartening and tragic because, although the hartal of 6th April was widely observed, in many cities the observance was marked by death and violence on a scale which led Gandhi to confer later on, that he had committed a 'Himalayan blunder' in assuming that the masses were sufficiently educated in the

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104 H.F. Owen 'Organizing for the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919' in R. Kumar edited op. cit., p. 70, 77-78
principles of ahimsa to prosecute a political campaign in a peaceful and non-violent manner." 106

Owing to its failure in keeping with the principle of non-violence Gandhi had withdrawn the movement on April 18th. Withdrawal of Rowlatt Satyagraha ushered in a new chapter, namely, "that the leader must recognize where the followers are". 107 Even though the Satyagraha failed in getting the Rowlatt Act repealed it was during this movement that "Gandhi was able to begin the process of transforming social groups into a cohesive, articulate political community." 108

Amritsar Tragedy and Khilafat Issue:

The Punjab incident was another shock to the people. They now found the ugliness and brutality that lay behind the façade of civilization professed by the British. Feelings of resentment ran through out the country. The 'Punjab issue' gave tremendous impetus to the freedom struggle. Thousands of hitherto uncommitted people were now drawn into the vortex of political movement. It warranted the reappraisal of congress policies and marked the commencement of the non-co-operation

106 D.E.U. Baker, op. cit., pp. 93-95
107 Anima Bose, op. cit., p. 167
108 Ibid., p. 170
movement. The Amritsar tragedy brought freedom a little more closer. Now Gandhi turned his attention to Punjab wrongs and Khilafat issue. Gandhi’s emergence and recognition as a potential all India leader were occasioned in the intervening mouth by the Rowlatt Satyagraha. His claim to a new status in politic was reinforced by his decision to champion the Khilafat and Punjab ‘wrongs’.

Many Muslims in India were much sore about the Allies post war treatment of Turkey. The undermining of the position of the sultan inflamed the feelings of Indian Muslim leaders. In September 1919 they, under the leadership of Ali brothers (Maulana Muahammed Ali and Shoukath Ali), Maulana Azad, Hakin Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani formed an all India Khilafat committee and started organizing a country wide agitation against the British in India.

The Congress leaders including Tilak and Gandhi viewed the Khilafat agitation as a golden opportunity to bring the Muslims into national movement. In November 1919 Gandhi along with Motilal Nehru, and Madan Mohan Malaviya took part in an all India Khilafat Conference. There he urged the Khilafatists to turn to Non-co-operation and boycott for getting their demands accepted by the British. This meeting was

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109 Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 189
moment of great importance for the Khilafat movement. For the first time Gandhi envisaged total withdrawal of co-operation from the government and for the first time he used the word ‘non-co-operation’ though on that occasion he was thinking aloud and had not worked out the implications of his suggestion.\textsuperscript{110}

In early 1920 Gandhi declared that he would lead a movement of non-violent non-co-operation if the terms of the peace treaty with Turkey did not satisfy the Indian Muslims. The Treaty of Serves (May 1920) disappointed the Muslims. The Khilafat committee decided to launch a Non-co-operation movement on 1st August 1920. The Congress officially supported the Khilafat committee. The Khilafat Committee agreed upon the triple purpose of non-co-operation – the redressal of the Punjab grievances, rectification of the Khilafat wrongs and the establishment of Swaraj.

According to C. Sankaran Nair “Mr. Gandhi and his followers took it (Khilafat movement) as an anti-British movement to secure Mohammedan support to his non-co-operation movement.”\textsuperscript{111} Gandhi took the issue of Khilafat to get the support of the Muslims. At the earlier

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 202
\textsuperscript{111} C. Sankaran Nair, \textit{Gandhi and Anarchy}, Chettur Sankaran Nair Foundation, Ottapalam, 2000, (third edition), P. 33
stages of the Khilafat movement it did not get any active support from the Hindus. But the Punjab issue gave Gandhi an opportunity to attract the Hindus also to back the movement. Gandhi's chance of neutralizing the fears of the Hindus and swinging them into a working communal alliance thereby making non-co-operation such a success that Muslims would feel less need to resort to violence lay in championing a Hindu cause to match the Khilafat. The Punjab issue provided the missing ingredient.112

Some historians criticize the Khilafat agitation for having mixed politics with religion. As a result, religious consciousness spread to politics and in the long run forces of communalism were strengthened. With the fall of the Khilafat movement the Hindu-Muslim unity also received a set back. The Khilafat movement had represented much wider feelings of Muslims against the British. The Nationalist leadership should have raised this 'religious political consciousness' of the Muslims to the higher plane of 'secular political consciousness'. They failed in it. The leader including Gandhi paid little attention to the practical aspects of their objective and showed no awareness of the current of political thought in Turkey. Anyhow, the Khilafat and the Non-co-operation, movement made a practical advantage to the freedom struggle. It carried

112 Judith Brown, op. cit., p. 229
the anti-British and national sentiments to the remotest corners of the country. Thereby it awakened the whole of the country politically.

The Khilafat and the Non-co-operation movement marked an important stage in the National movements as well as in the political career of Mahatma Gandhi.

The Khilafat movement from early 1919 until the inauguration of non-cooperation on 1st August 1920 was the context of Gandhi’s rapid emergence as an all-India political leader who was markedly different from the politicians who had previously dominated India’s political world. During the Rowlatt Satyagraha Gandhi had advised specific and limited types of civil disobedience by a picked group of Satygrahis: by mid-1920 his participation in the Khilafat movement had led him to try to organize a mass movement of political protest, taking the form of withdrawal of cooperation from the government. This new departure was the complete antithesis of the limited politics of the Congress and older Muslim League leaders. It presumed the participation in politics of far greater numbers from a much wider social, religious and geographical range than before. It also undermined the basic assumption on which conventional politic rested, namely that the aims of the tiny fraction of the Indian population
who made up the political nation were most likely to be reached by 
judicious cooperation with the raj.\footnote{Ibid., p. 228}

**Non Cooperation Movement:**

In support of the Khilafat Movement, Gandhi had launched in 
August 1920 a programme of non-violent non-cooperation with the 
Government. The reluctance of Hindu politicians to commit themselves to 
non-cooperation before discussion of it at the Special Congress in 
September made Gandhi act on his own authority. Despite an appeal to 
desist by Madan Mohan Malaviya, he launched his programme of non-
cooperation on 1\textsuperscript{st} August, explaining that for him non-cooperation was a 
matter of conscience which could not wait on Congress deliberations.\footnote{Ibid., p. 251} 
The Congress at its Nagpur session in December 1920 endorsed Gandhi’s 
programme. The Congress finalized a triple aim of non – cooperation 
movement: the redress of the Punjab grievances, the rectification of the 
Khilafat wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj. The movement was to 
proceed in different stages beginning with the renunciation of titles to be 
followed by the boycott of legislatures, law courts and educational 
institutions, and the campaign of non-payment of taxes.
There was a widespread response to Gandhi's call for non-cooperation with the Government. The year 1921 witnessed unprecedented movement of Indian people. His call was heard from the North-West Frontier to Malabar, from Sind to Assam, with the implication that throughout India there were regional leaders who would publicize Gandhi's views and sometimes organize his campaigns in their own localities. As the tempo of the movement arose the unemployed labourers, factory workers and urban poor joined the movement. The non-cooperation movement filled the rural areas with a new enthusiasm. The Congress call for the non-payment of taxes had a tremendous impact on the exploited peasants.\(^{115}\)

The unprecedented awakening in the whole of India caused much anxiety to the government which resorted to the repression of the people. The Congress and Khilafat volunteers were declared illegal. By the end of 1921 all top leaders – the Ali brothers, Moulana Azad, Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajput Rai, C.R. Das and Jawaharlal Nehru except Gandhi were arrested.

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The annual session of the Congress met at Ahmedabad in December 1921 and affirmed its determination to continue the programme of non-cooperation with greater vigor. Further it authorized individual or mass civil disobedience wherever possible on non-violent lines. Gandhi was to be the sole 'dictator' of the movement. Gandhi decided to launch a mass disobedience movement through a no-tax campaign in Bardoli district of Gujarat. However, the Chauri Chaura incident put an end to the whole programme. Gandhi took a very serious view of the incident. He was 'convinced' that the people were not yet ready to call off the entire Non-Cooperation movement. The Congress working committee was hastily summoned at Bardoli. The Committee which met on 12th February 1922 decided the suspension of all non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement.  

The sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement virtually stunned the country. It split the congress sharply, leading to the formation of the Swaraj Party by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru who entered the legislatures boycotted earlier. The last scene of the drama was the arrest of Gandhi on 10th March 1922 on the

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116 CWMG, Vol. 26, p. 138
charge of spreading disaffection against the Government.\textsuperscript{117} After a historic trial he was sentenced to a 6 year’s imprisonment. However, he was released within two years for reasons of health.

The Non-cooperation movement brought Gandhi into the limelight of all India politics. Another significant result was that it removed from the popular mind the sense of terror and ignominy associated with jail-entry. Jail – going became respectable and a badge of honour. Again the fear complex instilled by foreign rule was removed. People were no longer afraid. It also left a bad legacy of denying constituted authority. In Sankaran Nair’s words “To me his Non-co-operation Campaign appears to be an egregious blunder for which we are already paying dearly.”\textsuperscript{118}

Constitutionalists’ Opposition to Non-Cooperation:

Constitutionalists criticized Gandhi for making boycott of council an important weapon of his struggle and also for not co-operating with the constituted authority. Sankaran Nair considers boycott of councils of the Non – co-operators as a blessing in disguise. “Had the Non – co-operator been member of these councils and had they acted in their present temper, they might well have wrecked the Reforms and have set

\textsuperscript{117} CWMG, Vol.28, p. 323  
\textsuperscript{118} C. Sankaran Nair, op. cit., p. 1
back the clock of India’s progress even more than they have done already.\footnote{Ibid., p. 54} Sree Kumaran Nair considers it as a tactical failure of Gandhi. According to him through the boycott of councils “Gandhi was giving a free hand to government and its minion to carry whatever measures they desired and to impose them upon the people regardless of their susceptibilities.”\footnote{M. P. Sreekumaran Nair, \textit{Values in Conflict}, Chettur Sankaran Nair Foundation, Kerala, 2000 (Reprint), p. 75}

But Judith Brown considers the reaction of the elite or constitutionalist politician to the Non-co-operation movement as motivated by a hunger for power. Another reason why they opposed it was that it threatened their whole life style and security. They also feared that Non-co-operation movement would precipitate violence, as in 1919.\footnote{Judith Brown, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 275} The leaders who opposed it were C.R. Das, Malaviya, and Lajput Rai etc. Constitutionalists tried to highlight the negative side of Gandhi’s technique without considering that he emerged as leader of National movement when they failed to lead a movement against Rowlatt Act. It was their failure which led to the emergence of Gandhi as a National leader. The failure of limited politics gave Gandhi his chance to attain
leadership in the politics of Indian nationalism. The Khilafat and Punjab issues had shown up the impotence of elitist politics when the rulers stood firm. Economic change, war-time hardship and constitutional reform had increased the number of the politically aware, with the result that the political elite now found itself one group among many, surrounded by new recruits to institutional politics who might become allies but might prove to be opponents if their interests differed from those of the established politicians.

Gandhi started his political career in India with some regional issues. Rowlett Satyagraha made Gandhi a prominent figure in India Politics. Later he consolidated his position with the organization and with the Khilafat issue. His dominance in Congress was clear when despite severe opposition to his policy of non-co-operation he made the congress to accept his ideas. It was he who relieved the congress leaders when they were in a dilemma to overcome the political crisis which they faced with the enactment of Rowlatt Act. He gave them a new type of technique to wage a struggle against the Act which gave Gandhi a stand in the political field. Moreover Tilak one of the prominent leaders of the Congress died in 1920. Gandhi became a political heir to Tilak. Once he

122 Ibid., p. 248
got access to the Congress he started dominating the Congress. This was based on the political programme that he introduced and not due to any factional squabbles or political manipulations. His success lay in the drawbacks of the prominent politicians of the time. They never tried to bring the masses in to the political forefront. But Gandhi heavily relied upon them. A crucial limitation of his movement was that he overestimated the capacity of the masses to remain non violent. That is an important reason that both the hartal, which he organized as a protest against Rowlatt Act and the non-co-operation movement ended in violence.