The spiritual man has always wielded great power in India and is called a Mahatma, Saint or Sadhu. A Mahatma is thought to be an embodiment of all that is noble and high. He is one who has risen above the common mass but still is a part of it. Gandhi also came to be looked upon by the mass of the people as a Mahatma before he became the undisputed political leader of the country. So great was the enthusiasm and respect in the people about Gandhi at A.I.C.C. session at Nagpur in 1920 that when M.A. Jinnah who was still then a nationalist leader, addressed him as 'Mr. Gandhi', he was shouted down by the thousands of the people, who insisted that he should address him as 'Mahatma Gandhi'. There was something in Gandhi which appealed to the mass of the people. His asceticism, simple life, vegetarian diet, adherence to truth and non-violence—all combined to give him the halo of saintliness. He identified himself so completely with the Indian masses that wherever he went even the poorest of the poor felt that he was one

among them, he talked to the people in the language they could comprehend. While telling people about Swaraj, he did not always talk about freedom and liberty but reminded them of the glories of Ramrajya. When he talked about conquering through love and ahimsa, people were reminded of the Mahatma of the old age. All this was a tremendous asset to Gandhi in compelling the attention and obedience of his countrymen. Ever since Gandhi entered the political arena in India, other leaders had been eclipsed by his magnetic personality. The nation could of course boast of many able and farsighted leaders, capable of looking at a problem from all the angles. Dr. Rajendra Prasad rightly admitted that "when Gandhi took over the helm, many were content to fall in line and nod to whatever he said and hardly thought it necessary to do their own thinking." ²

Realising the power that Gandhi had wielded, Sir J.H. Holmes wrote, as early as in early twenties, "This man holds absolutely in his hands today the destinies of his people. When Gandhi speaks, it is India that speaks. When Gandhi acts it is the India that acts. When Gandhi is arrested it is the India that is outraged and humiliated. More truly, I believe, than any other man who has ever lived, this great Indian is the incarnation of a people's

He further commented, "A great journal, the 'New York World', sends its leading correspondent to India to 'spy out the land' and he returns to write of Gandhi and his policy of Non-Violence and Non-Co-Operation. From almost utter obscurity, this man mounts in a few months to a fame which is universal as it promises to be immortal. He holds today the centre of the world's attention. That position of primacy held so proudly by Woodrow Wilson in 1918 and 1919, and by Nicolas Lenin in 1920 and 1921, is now occupied by a little Oriental who has never held any official position, who seeks neither glory nor power."  

In order to verify and examine the extent of power, Gandhi wielded over Indian National Congress, his effect on the organizational structure and working of the Congress should be analysed. In the present chapter the main focus will be on these two effects.

Gandhi took over in Nagpur in December 1920, the control of the Congress which he maintained to keep with varying degree of success right till the end of his life in January, 1948. Right from 1920 onwards the Congress

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4 Ibid., p.4.
began to preach his doctrines and a large number of Congressmen accepted Gandhi not merely as a political leader but also as a religious preceptor. Gandhi's position as a mass leader did not depend on holding any office in any organization in general and the Congress in particular. To be the president of the Congress was no great achievement for him. Lesser men had filled that post before him. That was not material. He had virtually controlled the organizational structure of the Congress long before its session at Belgaum in December, 1924, when he formally accepted the role of president. He refused its presidency in 1929, and thereafter wielded no formal authority in it except that was delegated to him for specific purposes. In 1929, he made Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru as the President of the Congress. When the Congress met at Lahore, Gandhi on his own admission had to conceive and frame practically every resolution and his resolution on independence as the Congress goal to be achieved by civil disobedience if necessary was passed. The session proceedings caused N.C. Kelkar to lament 'that Congress should so surrender its conscience to Mr. Gandhi speaks volumes to the credit of his personality'.

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5 KSH, Volume XLI, pp.482-83.
6 ibid, Volume XLIII, p.43.
Gandhi had been a far bigger person in the Congress than any Congress president could possibly be. He had been the president maker. There were a number of presidents of the Congress who had almost been made by him. Repeatedly he refused to preside and preferred that some of his colleagues and lieutenants should do so. With exception of Subhas Chandra Bose for the second time in Tripuri session of 1939, all other presidents of Indian National Congress after late twenties owe their presidency to him. Even in the selection of the members of Congress Working Committees he had the final say. The Working Committee since 1929 had been elected according to his dictation and no one could find a place on that committee who was not thoroughly submissive to him and his policy. All the presidents used to nominate the members in the Working Committee in consultation with Gandhi and invariably his suggestions had been followed. Jawahar Lal Nehru records in his autobiography that when Vallabhbhai Patel was elected the president of the Karachi Congress session in 1931, 'the whole Committee including Vallabhbhai Patel, begged Gandhi to accept the presidency and thus to be the titular head, as he was the real head, of the Congress during the coming critical year. He would not agree, and insisted on Vallabhbhai accepting it'.

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He further adds, "I remember that it was pointed out to him at the time that he wanted to be Mussolini all the time while others were made by him temporary kings and figureheads." Rather it would be more accurate to state that Gandhi used to distribute the presidency of the Indian National Congress among his lieutenants according to their work for the party and the nation. When initially Dr. Rajendra Prasad was reluctant to accept the offer of presidency of the Congress in 1934, Mahadev Desai wrote to him on behalf of Gandhi, saying that the country wanted to show its gratitude and satisfaction at the work he had done for the relief of the victims of the Bihar earthquake and that he should accept the presidency. Not to speak of the selections of members of working committee, even the presidential address which Dr. Rajendra Prasad read at Bombay was written in consultation with him.

The first challenge to Gandhi's supremacy in the organization of Congress was from Subhas Bose. The fifty-first session of the Congress met at Haripura in February 1938. The growing influence of the younger and more radical section of Congress was indicated by unanimous election of Subhas Chandra Bose as the president of the Congress.

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session. There were certain fundamental differences between the approaches of Subhas Chandra Bose and those of Gandhi. But Gandhi did not oppose the election of Bose in 1936. Subhas Bose having become the executive head of the Congress, the difference between the radical section of the Congress led by him and the other section led by Gandhi became irreconcilable. The real trouble began when Subhas Bose sought the second term for presidency of the Congress for Tripuri session in March 1939. Gandhi opposed the candidature of Bose and supported the candidature of Pattabhi Sitaramayya backing him with all his power in the Congress. This was a serious challenge to the power of Gandhi in the Congress. Bose clearly had a large volume of opinion in the Congress behind him. In spite of the strong opposition of Gandhi, Subhas Bose won by a majority of 95 votes against Sitaramayya. This led to a statement by Gandhi that the defeat of Pattabhi Sitaramayya was his own defeat. "I must confess that from the very beginning, I was decidedly against his re-election for reasons into which I need not go... Nevertheless, I am glad of his victory. And since I was instrumental in inducing Dr. Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate, when Maulana Bahadur withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his." 11 Bose's victory was

11 The CNAG, Volume LXVIII, p.359.
mostly the result of some new developments during the election. Perhaps, it was because of the withdrawal of Maulana Azad at the last minute. Sitaramayya was a covering candidate and was hardly known outside his own province. Yet the effect of a statement of this kind by Gandhi 'created consternation in the country', and its effect was seen in the crossing of the floor by an appreciable number of those who had voted for Subhas. The consequences of the election of Subhas Bose and the revolt against it by Gandhian section of the Congress was reflected in the resignation of the seventeen members of the Working Committee, leaving Subhas and his brother Sarat Chander Bose alone as members of the Committee. Later came a formal notice by G.B. Pant and a large number of other members of A.I.C.C. of their intention to move a resolution at the session of the Congress, which, in fact, placed the leadership of the Congress in the hands of Gandhi as they requested the president to nominate a Working Committee in accordance with his wishes. When the Congress took up the resolution of G.B. Pant, the wide differences in regard to it gave rise to tumultuous scenes which led to the adjournment of the session till the next day. Eventually the resolution was adopted at the open

session on the next day. In effect, it placed the Congress wholly under the leadership of Gandhi, ignoring the view of the radical wing in the Congress and Subhas Bose was forced to resign from the presidency of the Indian National Congress. Rajendra Prasad was elected in his place who even announced his working Committee after getting approval of Gandhi. In 1940, Gandhi asked Maulana Azad to become the President of the Congress. But because of the world war and several other circumstances, the election of the President of the Congress could not be held for six years. In 1946, Jawahar Lal Nehru, the closest associate of Gandhi became the President. But he was invited by the Viceroy to form the Interim Government. His accession to the office in the Interim Government necessitated, a fresh election of president of the Congress, according to its constitution. J.B. Kripalani was elected in his place. On this election Fattabhi Sitaramayya commented, "Since Rajendra Babu presided over the Bombay session, a 'kattar Gandhi-ite' had not adorned the gadi of the Congress and Achariya Kripalani has worthily filled the gap much to popular rejoicing."

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14 Ibid., p. 349.
All these facts are self-explanatory and clearly show the power that Gandhi had exercised in the organizational structure of the Congress. But this does not mean that there was no difference of opinion between Gandhi and the Congress party. On several occasions the Congress High Command differed with Gandhi. The basis of these differences was ostensibly their different attitudes to the principle of non-violence. In the first few months of the Second World War such differences surfaced. While the Congress Working Committee was prepared to apply the principle of non-violence only in the struggle against the British Government, it was not prepared to bind itself to the adoption of only non-violent means in dealing with communal riots or goondaism or in resisting foreign invaders. Gandhi was insistent that all the problems of internal order and resistance to external attack should also be solved on the principles of non-violence. Further the Working Committee was prepared to give support to the British Government in war efforts provided the latter satisfied the conditions laid down by the Congress. Gandhi was prepared to give only moral and non-violent support. The conflict appeared in a mild form at the very first meeting of the Working Committee held after the outbreak of the war. The circumstances
in which the working Committee refused to accept Gandhi's advice were that war had just broken out and that it was by no means clear how each side in the war and each country on the side of non-Fascist power, would react. The working Committee, therefore, did not want to bind itself to a course of action which would weaken its position in any possible negotiation with the British. Subsequent developments, however, made it clear that the British were far from being ready for negotiation and settlement with the Congress on the basis laid down by it. This convinced the working Committee that the British would not concede its demand unless greater pressure was brought to bear on them. The Committee, therefore, first called upon the Congress ministers in the provinces to resign. This was to be followed by other steps. In these circumstances, Gandhi's stand on non-violence, his appeal to the British and allied people not to meet Nazi militarism with counter militarism, but to resist the Nazis with non-violent means, came in handy for the working Committee. For, it served the purpose of whipping up the anti-war sentiment of the people which

was already rising at a very fast rate and thus creating conditions in which the British rulers would realise that it was by no means easy for them to continue their war efforts. So the conflict disappeared.

The Working Committee asked the people in general and the Congressmen in particular, to follow Gandhi's instructions in order to prepare themselves for the struggle. For the first time after 1934 Bombay session, Gandhi addressed a session of the Congress at Ramgarh.

Soon, however, the international situation changed. Britain and her allies suffered a series of reverses at the hands of the Nazis in May–June 1940. The whole of Western Europe fell under the Nazi jackpots and there was great concern at the fate of Britain itself. There was a change of Government in Britain, Churchill replacing Chamberlain. In these circumstances the conflict between Working Committee and Gandhi again broke out in a more acute form than in the first few days after the outbreak of the war. The majority of the Working Committee felt that here was a situation in which the very immensity of the danger of Britain's own national security might force British statesmen to seek a settlement with the Congress in India. If that happened, then it would obviously be

inconvenient for the Congress to be saddled with the leadership of a man who declared that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given on a purely non-violent basis.

After prolonged discussions in which Gandhi participated, the Working Committee announced on June 21, 1940 that they were not able to extend the creed of non-violence to national defence. They, therefore, decided to absolve Gandhi of his responsibility to lead the country toward a non-violent struggle. This was soon followed by a meeting of the A.I.C.C. at Poona at which President Maulana Azad said, "The Indian National Congress is a political organization, pledged to win political independence of the country. It is not an institution for organizing world peace. Honestly we cannot go as far as Mahatma Gandhi wants us to go. We admit that it is a weakness on our part, but it is a weakness which we share with the entire humanity... We have to solve every difficulty that presents itself to us, and we have also to recognize the hard fact of Mahatma Gandhi's separation from us. We must bear it bravely." This was the session of the A.I.C.C. which made the well known Poona Offer – the

20 Ibid., Volume II, p.175.
21 Ibid., p.194.
offer that the Congress was prepared to participate in a national government in order to defend the country against external aggression, provided, of course, the British government declared its readiness to recognise the freedom of India after the war.

This, however, did not meet with the expected response from the Britishers. The Poona Offer of the Congress in July was countered by the August Offer of the British in which the Viceroy maintained that the new Constitution should be framed by the Indians themselves but under two conditions: firstly, the British obligations must be fulfilled and secondly, the minority opinion must not be overrun. The open rejection of the Congress offer by the British government once again led the Congress to fall in the lap of Gandhi. The Working Committee called an emergency meeting of the ALOC at which president Maulana Azad said, "These events made us decide to again request Mahatma Gandhi to assume the active leadership of the Congress. I am glad to inform you that he has agreed to do this, as now there is no difference whatever between him and the Working Committee."\(^{22}\)

It is, however, significant that a few months later, in December 1941, the Gandhi-Working Committee conflict did break out once again. In these months the international situation suddenly changed. The Working Committee modified

\(^{22}\)Ibid., p.212.
its earlier attitude. This led Gandhi to write a letter to the Working Committee in which he expressed his surprise at the difference between his interpretation of the Bombay resolution and that of others. Gandhi asked for being relieved of the responsibility laid upon him by the Bombay resolution and the Working Committee agreed to do so.23

His advocacy of non-violence, his determination to fight the war efforts in a non-violent way, proved effective as a form of pressure against the Government. The Working Committee, therefore, always put itself under his leadership whenever there was necessity for giving a threat of the struggle or organising a struggle. On the other hand, whenever there was an opportunity for negotiations with the British, the Working Committee took a realistic position as negotiations could be conducted only on the basis of offering India's cooperation with the British if power was transferred. On all such occasions, Gandhi himself asked that he should be relieved of leadership and to which the Working Committee readily agreed.

The biggest example of the conflict and agreement between Gandhi and the rest of the Congress leadership was the manner in which subsequent negotiations were

23 Ibid., 1942, Volume I, p.274.
conducted between the Congress and the representatives of the British. It was for the purpose of enabling the Congress Working Committee to carry on negotiations that Gandhi gave up leadership of the Congress towards the end of 1941 and in the beginning of 1942. While the negotiations were formally conducted by the Congress President and the Working Committee, Gandhi's advice was nevertheless sought at every stage. While he himself kept formally out of the negotiations, he was the voice which was decisive in shaping the policy of the Congress negotiations. Further, the moment the negotiations broke down, the moment it was clear that the British were not prepared to grant the minimum that was demanded of them by the Congress, Gandhi once again came to the fore front as the leader of the anti-war, anti-British mass movement.

Paulana Azad narrated an interesting incident which shows the actual working of the Working Committee when it was discussing the war issue and the firm grip which Gandhi had hold over them.

"When the Working Committee began its discussions, I elaborated these points in detail. Among members of the Working Committee only Jawahar Lal supported me and then only upto a point. The other members would not oppose Gandhiji even when they were not fully convinced."
This was not a new experience for me. Apart from Jawahar Lal, who often agreed with me, the other members were generally content to follow Gandhiji's lead. Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kriplani had no clear idea about the war. They rarely tried to judge things on their own and in any case they were accustomed to subordinate their judgement to Gandhiji. As such, discussion with them was almost useless. After all our discussions, the only thing they could say was that we must have faith in Gandhiji.²⁴

Thus the members of the Working Committee were so convinced about Gandhi that they were not prepared to listen or discuss anything against him. Azad himself differed from him on the principle of non-violence which he considered impracticable in those circumstances. Things reached a climax when Gandhi asked for Azad's resignation. He sent a letter to Azad that if Congress wanted him to lead the movement, the latter must resign from the presidency and also withdraw from the Working Committee. Jawahar Lal must do the same. But with the intervention of Sardar Patel and others the letter was withdrawn and Azad had to bow before his wishes.²⁵

²⁵ Ibid., p.90.
Using the causal concept of power as discussed in the first chapter, we can show here, how Gandhi exercised his power over Asad.

Gandhi's Preference

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Asad's anticipation of Gandhi's future reaction

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Asad's response

The point which we want to stress here is that Gandhi's preference caused change in the preference of Asad. The reason may be any, Asad's anticipation of Gandhi's future reaction, or Gandhi's influence or any other. This is only in one case. Similar figures can be made about all other members of the working committee or A.I.C.C. who attempted to differ from him. Thus it becomes emphatically clear that Gandhi exercised substantial power in the organizational structure of the Congress.

Along with exercising power over the organizational structure of the Congress, Gandhi directed almost its entire working. (The second parameter of measuring Gandhi's power). All the major political campaigns which the party undertook were led by him. For the sake of convenience,
here only two of the major campaigns viz. civil-disobedience movement and Quit India movement will be analyzed.

His leadership of the civil-disobedience movement which began in 1930 probably marked the peak of his political power. This was his second continental campaign on non-cooperation with the imperial structure and was the most serious country-wide agitational challenge which the British faced in their Indian empire. It attracted considerable participation and even wider public sympathy in India and brought Gandhi and his claims to the attention of a world-wide audience. The Congress in its Lahore session of 1929 declared Complete Independence 'Iocna Swaraj' as its goal and Gandhi's resolution on Independence as the Congress goal to be achieved by civil-disobedience if necessary was passed.\(^2^6\) Gandhi sensed the atmosphere correctly and he stated that civil-disobedience alone could save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime,\(^2^7\) since there was a party of violence in the country, which would not listen to speeches, resolutions and conferences, but believed only in direct action. The decision to break the salt laws and the march to Dandi which Gandhi undertook were looked upon by the people as

\(^{26}\) *The CWGC*, Volume XLII, p. 345.

the beginning of a big mass movement for securing complete independence. And when the campaign of mass defiance of the salt laws started, first at Dandi by Gandhi himself and later by other leaders in several places all over the country, men, women and children flocked to witness the defiance of the British made law. Undaunted by arrests, lathi charges and firings, people flocked to the banner of Congress and participated in the movement. The number of arrests had risen to 60,000 a month after the launching of the Satyagraha. Later on, it rose to near about 1,00,000.28 These persons did not belong to any advanced democratic country of great political awakening but were the meek, silent and politically backward masses of India. The credit of converting these innocent persons into politically vigilant citizens, who even courted arrest themselves, went to the Congress in general and Gandhi in particular. In other words it can be easily stated that Gandhi caused this change in the behaviour of these persons. This speaks volumes of the power Gandhi wielded over the Indian masses. Unprecedented enthusiasm was exhibited everywhere. Even the women of the most orthodox and aristocratic families were moved. Everywhere women came out

in their thousands to carry out the Congress mandate.
Not only the government but the people of the country
as well, were taken by surprise at the manifestation of
Gandhi's power. The Congress working Committee had
vested him with all the power for conducting the civil
disobedience campaign. The president of the Congress,
Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, made a statement in the meeting
of AICC at Ahmedabad that Gandhi had been chosen as
their general. The AICC approved and endorsed the
resolution of working Committee which had authorised him
to initiate and control civil disobedience campaign.29

Faced by a non-violent rebellion, the government
first proceeded to curb the movement with a heavy hand.
The government became entirely ruthless and brutal in
its attempt at suppression. The Congress was declared
as an unlawful association. Numberless arrests were made.
The criminals were released to make room for political
prisoners. Government by ordinances went on apace. By
July, 67 nationalist papers and about 55 printing presses
had been shut down under the Press Ordinance.30 But it
failed to check the enthusiasm of the masses. Then, it
had no other alternative but to come to terms with the
leader of the movement. The fact that Lord Irwin was

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30 Tendulkar, D.G. Mahatma: Life of Mowandas
Karam Chand Gandhi, Volume III, (Delhi: The
Publications Division, Ministry of Information
and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1951), p.44.
prepared to talk for hours with Gandhi indicated that he too believed that Gandhi, if any one could, deliver the goods. Certainly Gandhi was suited for a negotiating role by temperament, experience and ideological stance. He always insisted that Satyagraha aimed at converting the opponent and, therefore, negotiation was essential in certain stages of a conflict. His talks with Irwin covered eight meetings over three weeks and produced what came to be known as Gandhi-Irwin pact. Its text read like a treaty between two sovereign powers and that was the measure of Gandhi’s triumph. Under it the Government agreed to release from the jails, the thousands of the Satyagrahis and Gandhi for his part agreed to call off the movement and attend a Round Table Conference in London to discuss India’s future.

The Congress authorised Gandhi to represent it at the Second Round Table Conference with the addition of such other delegates as the working Committee may appoint to act under his leadership. But he went alone as only one representative of the masses in general and of the Congress in particular. Perhaps no other evidence is needed to establish the extent of political power Gandhi exercised.

The Round Table Conference brought Gandhi more squarely into the centre of the whole world attention. The press of the period, in all nations, reflected the intense curiosity he had aroused. In the words of Vincent Sheean, "Everybody of note and many of no note wanted a 'Gandhi Interview': scholars, theologians and scientists as well as politicians or journalists. Bernard Shaw, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the King, the Queen, the youngest American newspaper reporter, the children in the streets—all were same to Gandhi and he treated them exactly alike. The loincloth, the goat, the almost toothless grin, the unfailing good humour, and the love of innocent laughter—all this became familiar to the whole Western world in such a wealth of detail as one can scarcely remember in any other connection."  

Gandhi's position as a leader in the key decision on civil disobedience was equally apparent in the second round of the campaign. Congress delayed its decision whether to revert to the tactic until he returned from London at the end of December 1931. The extent to which Gandhi's colleagues were prepared to wait for his advice indicates both the weight they gave to his personal view, and their inability to agree amongst themselves without him. When he returned in December 1931, he sought an

interview with the new Viceroy (as Lord Irwin was replaced by Lord Willingdon as Viceroy). But Lord Willingdon refused to see him.\textsuperscript{33} It may have been that Lord Willingdon was only carrying out instructions from Whitehall, but wherever the blame lay, a definite change of policy had taken place as one viceroy left and another arrived. It was going back to the theory that Gandhi was only one leader among the innumerable leaders in India. Yet he was only one who could deliver the goods. One remembered the vague gesture of Lord Willingdon as Governor of Bombay, when he had told Gandhi that Government house would always be open to him. A decade had passed and if Lord Willingdon had grown in importance since then and became a Viceroy while he was only a Governor before, the importance of Gandhi in India had increased a hundred fold or more.\textsuperscript{34}

By 1932 Congressmen were beginning to complain that civil disobedience was unproductive and many began to press for a change of policy. The majority of the Congressmen who went to Poona to attend Leaders' Conference in July 1933, favoured abandoning civil disobedience.\textsuperscript{35} but

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Dr. P. V. D. V. Lebhardt, \textit{The Congress}, Volume XLVIII, p.487.
\item Dr. P. V. D. V. Lebhardt, \textit{The Congress}, Volume LV, p.262.
\end{itemize}
Gandhi opened the meeting by an eighty minute speech and by brisk conversing in the interval before voting. The vote went against abandoning the movement and Gandhi was authorized to approach the Viceroy when that move proved abortive, Bapuji Madhavrao Amney, the then President of the Congress announced on 22 July, 1933, on the basis of Poona discussions and Gandhi's advice, that civil disobedience movement would not be unconditionally withdrawn, but that it should be discontinued as a mass movement. N.C. Kelkar reacted to this demonstration of Gandhi's power: "It is quite clear that even the Congress workers were against continuing the civil disobedience movement and yet they defeated the first resolution about unconditional and immediate discontinuance out of loyalty to Mr. Gandhi. Lip sealing has been the bane of public life under Gandhi's regime."

Gandhi launched Quit India movement almost simultaneously by his article in the Harijan entitled 'Foreign Soldiers in India' published in the issue of April 26, 1942, and secondly by his resolution sent to the Congress Working Committee in the last week of April 1942.

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36 Ibid., pp.265-67.
37 Ibid., pp.450-51.
39 Harijan, 26.4.1942, p.128.
The resolution excited heated discussion among the members of working Committee and resulted in a compromise resolution which differed considerably in its wording.

The Working Committee greatly toned down those proportions enunciating hostility towards the war and the apparent pro-Japanese terror that Gandhi's resolution had; nor did it go to the same extent on the question of granting independence to India. The compromise resolution did not meet Gandhi's approval and he summoned certain leaders to Sevagram immediately to discuss with him. By the end of June, Gandhi had succeeded in bringing the members, who were opposed to him, into general agreement with him. The agreement found expression in the Working Committee resolution of July 14, which demanded grant of independence and threatened non-violent struggle if it was not forthcoming.

The All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay on August 7, 1942. The AICC passed the "Ardha resolution and appealed to the people to hold together under the leadership of Gandhi and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom.

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42 Ibid., pp. 209-11.
T. Wickenden I.C.S. submitted in his secret report on the Disturbance of 1942-43 that there is abundant material to show that Gandhi was determined to push through his project of making Britain withdraw from India whether he got the support from the Congress or not.43

Gandhi from the very beginning had made up his mind to launch a movement without delay for the attainment of independence and he was prepared to proceed with it despite all obstacles that might be encountered even from those who had worked closest with him. The movement was not the creation of Congress, which in the first place was hardly prepared to follow him at all, reluctantly fell in line and gradually developed a generally whole hearted support. Gandhi and the Congress were separate in the beginning but they gradually merged into one, Congress putting itself under Gandhi's leadership so that there was a complete identification between them.

Elaborating the scope of the movement, Gandhi said in the meeting of AICC, "Every one of you should from this movement onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free... I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom... Do or Die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt."44

44 The GWL, Volume LXXVI, pp.391-92.
government was closely following the activities of the Congress and had made elaborate preparations to nip any active rebellion in the bud. As soon as the AICC passed the resolution, they struck hard. The AICC meeting terminated late at night on 8 August, 1942. Before the next day dawned, the police arrested Gandhi, Azad, and all other eminent leaders of the Congress. Within a week almost everyone who mattered in the Congress organization was in jail. The sudden removal of all the leaders of the nation, left no responsible men or women to guide popular activities. The people simply grew desperate. The government tried to curb the movement not with a mere lathi but with rifle and revolver, with machine gun and ariel firing. The Home Member, Sir Reginald Maxwell admitted in the Central Assembly on February 12, 1943 that firing had been resorted to 530 times up to about the end of the year 1942 in connection with the disturbance following the Congress arrests. The number of the persons killed by police or military firing in 1942 was 940 and the number injured 1,630. 60,229 had been arrested in one year. The number of the persons convicted was approximately 26,000.45

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These official figures were considered gross underestimates by a large section of society. Popular estimates place the number of death and arrest much higher, because the satyagraha campaign of 1921 saw 30,000 prisoners in jail, of 1930, 60,000 and of 1932-33, 1,20,000.\(^46\) It is very difficult to arrive at on an appropriately correct figure. But one conclusion can be drawn safely from these facts and figures that Gandhi had enjoyed immense political power in the country. Using the causation approach of the concept of power, it can be stated that Gandhi caused this change in the behaviour of Indian masses. They came openly against the mighty British government. Indian masses are known for political apathy and possess a strong sense of tolerance even for bad administration. But Gandhi converted these silent observers into satyagrahis. Never in the history of India and perhaps in the whole world, so many persons presented themselves for jails, public flogging and even for death on the call of any one person. All this speaks volumes of the power, Gandhi had enjoyed over the masses of India.

Not to speak of the Congress and the masses, even the British Government had equally realized his power. So many times, the government requested him to help in maintaining law and order etc. Finally, when the partition of

the country had become inevitable and the prominent leaders of the all political parties had agreed to it, one unspoken fear troubled. Lord Mountbatten that Gandhi may not implement his declared policy of stopping the present agreement. On so many occasions Gandhi had opposed the proposal of partition. He even once told Maulana Azad about partition, "what a question to ask? If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body. So long as I am alive, I will never agree to the partition of India. Nor will I, if I can help it, allow Congress to accept it." Lord Mountbatten heaved a sigh of relief when Gandhi said in his prayer meeting, "The British Government is not responsible for partition. The Viceroy has no hand in it. In fact, he is as opposed to the division as Congress itself but if both of us - Hindus and Muslims cannot agree on anything else, than the Viceroy is left with no choice." It was, however, a very real risk. If Jinnah had been the man, who had destroyed the hopes of keeping India united, Gandhi was the man who could destroy his hope of dividing it. Mountbatten had well realized

that Gandhi had great resources at his command than other leaders of the Congress party. He had millions of members who worshipped him and he had above all, his uncommon skill at galvanizing those masses into action. It is only when Gandhi agreed, the partition became a possibility. Even when the A.I.C.C. was discussing the partition resolution of the Congress Working Committee, it was feared that it will not accept the resolution. When passions were rising high against the resolution, Gandhi intervened in the debate and asked them to accept the resolution. It was only after his intervention the A.I.C.C accepted the partition resolution.\(^{50}\) So the partition became possible only when Gandhi accepted. Perhaps there is no need of finding any other instance to show the power Gandhi wielded in the country.

Although Gandhi was the undisputed leader of the nation and completely dominated the organization and working of the Indian National Congress since 1920 till his death, yet he was not a dictator. On several occasions he modified his stand to make it more suitable to other leaders of the country. Whenever there was any dispute with anyone on any matter he never reached the stage of

\(^{50}\) The I.A.R., 1947, Volume I, pp.126-27.
complete break down. Whenever he felt that he could not lead the Congress according to his own view he used to retire from active politics.

Considering the influence of Gandhi in 1921-22, the rise of Swaraj Party must be regarded as something unaccountably remarkable. Over this, Subhas Bose remarked, "Though the leaders and rank and file of the party had highest respect for the personality of the Mahatma, the party was frankly an anti-Gandhi Party and it was strong enough to force Mahatma to voluntary retirement from politics". Swaraj party symbolised a revolt by a section of the Congress against the philosophy of Gandhi. Deshbandhu Das was able to combine all such elements in one party to wrest the Congress machinery from the hands of no-changers. But Gandhi took the formation of Swaraj Party very sportingly and avoided any direct confrontation with it. In an interview to the special correspondent of 'The Times of India', he made it clear, "If I see the slightest desire on the part of Swarajists to take over the Congress executives, I for one shall not resist the attempt, but let them take charge of the Congress executives." Although he opposed the Swarajists

52 Ibid., p.164.
53 The CWMG, Volume XXIV, p.203.
programme of entry into the Assembly and Councils, he
did not close his mind. He said in an interview to
The Hindu' on June 8, 1924, "If the Swarajists programme
is successful, I wish to be the first to join the party
and congratulate them, and then, I shall pocket all my
pride and my mental attitude."54 Thus his attitude
towards the Swarajists had been quite conciliatory and
gave full opportunity to them to air their views. But the
Swaraj party remained active as long as Gandhi did not
emerge from his voluntary retirement.

Gandhi was persuaded by Motilal Nehru to attend
Congress session at Calcutta in 1928. Weighing the
situation there, he acted as a compromiser. He gauged the
popular sentiments. Despite his original support for the
'Nehru Report' he proposed a resolution to unite those who
considered Dominion status the right goal and those who
clamoured for independence; its terms were if the British
did not accept the Nehru Constitution by the end of 1929
the Congress would organise a campaign of non-violent
non-cooperation.55 As a farsighted politician Gandhi read
the sign of time. The left wing opposition at the Calcutta
Congress had indeed been formidable and forced him to change
his original stand. He began his propaganda soon after the
Calcutta Congress that if by December 31, 1929 the Government

54 Ibid., p.214.
did not concede dominion status to India, he would become an Independence Wallah on January 1, 1930. He faced a serious challenge from the left wingers in the Congress party and had to change his stand. For Lahore Congress session Gandhi supported the candidature of Jawahar Lal Nehru who was then the leading spokesman of the left wingers. It was very essential for Gandhi to win over Jawahar Lal Nehru if he wanted to beat down the left wing opposition and regain his former undisputed supremacy over the Congress. So sometimes he used several diplomatic tactics to win over the opposing elements and even considerably changed his stand. His view of truth and non-violence and his technique of satyagraha implied evolving a policy based on synthesis and in suppression of the opponents' view-points.

He did not take the decisions alone. He always took other leaders into confidence. When T.B. Sapru and M.R. Jayakar met him in Yerwada jail for an understanding with the Government during the civil disobedience movement he refused to take the decision alone. Moreover he insisted that Jawahar Lal Nehru as Congress president should have the final say. At first he was more responsive than Nehru. Later on in July he told Jayakar that he thought

57. *Ibid.*, Volume XLIV, p.44.
the time was ripe for negotiation and that he could persuade his colleagues of this. However, when the two sets of prisoners were permitted to meet in Yerwada jail, persuasion evidently worked the other way, for their joint attitude became much stiffer. The Nehrus and Syed Mahmud, once back in Naini jail, refused to settle on the basis of Irwin's letter, but they insisted that the final decision should be Gandhi's. His attitude changed markedly between late July and early September, and now he endorsed his colleagues' stand. His leadership position was manifest in their deferring to him. Yet it was a leadership founded on an understanding of what his allies and followers could tolerate, particularly the younger of them, even if this meant modifying his initial position.

And when actually the deliberations between him and Lord Irwin took place, he kept the Congress Working Committee informed of all the developments of the day to day negotiations. On March 4, 1931 the negotiations came to an end and when Gandhi put before the Working Committee the terms of the pact, he made it quite clear that he would not proceed one step further without their unanimous support.

58 Ibid., pp. 473-76.
59 Ibid., pp. 117-121.
And when the working committee approved the pact, Gandhi and Lord Irwin put their signatures to it. When the publication of the pact created an uproar in the country, Jawahar Lal Nehru came out with the statement that he did not approve of some of the terms of pact—but as an obedient soldier he had to submit to the leader.\(^61\) Left wingers in the Congress party led by Subhas Chandra Bose bitterly criticised the pact. In Karachi Congress session where the pact was ratified by the A.I.C.C., Bose gave a statement in the Subjects Committee of the Congress that the left wing of the Congress did not approve of the Gandhi-Irwin pact but in view of the circumstances prevailing in the country at the time they would refrain from dividing the House.\(^62\) Thus Gandhi was not always blindly followed. On several occasions he was also criticised badly.

At the Second Round Table Conference in London Gandhi was the only representative of the Congress party. But he was not free to act upon as his own. He was bound by Karachi Congress resolution. The Karachi Resolution demanded control by India of finance, the army and foreign relations subject to safeguards demonstrably in the interest of India.\(^63\) In a speech at Friends House London, he told his audience,

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\(^62\) Ibid., p.289.

\(^63\) The I.A.R., 1931, Volume I, p.268.
You will be pleased to know that, as an agent holding a power of attorney from the Congress I shall have my limitations. I have to conduct myself within the four corners of the mandate that I have received from the Congress."

All these instances show that although he was the supreme leader of the Congress and the masses yet he was not a dictator. He never heaped his wishes on his followers. If any one differed from him, he gave due importance to his programmes. He always tried to convince his followers of the usefulness of his programmes. If one is not convinced, he never forced him to follow him. He always acted with open mind. Whenever someone convinced him about the faults in his programmes, he readily modified his stand. Thus he was their leader in the true sense of the term. He ruled over their hearts as well as their minds. And this is the trait of the true leadership.

Thus Congress of those days was largely his creation. He had converted it from a talking body into a living and fighting organisation. From 1920 onwards, till his death, he did not play second fiddle to any leader of Congress or other political parties.

Gandhi was not a career politician, anxious for continuing power. He was prepared to opt in and out of the

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64 The CMG, volume XLVIII, p.2.
political activity as conditions and circumstances changed. His retirement from Congress in 1934 was
emphatic assertion that he would only lead when he felt he could do so on his own terms. Such unconventional
political ambition and lack of commitment to constant political involvement made good sense too. It set
Gandhi apart as a leader of a different kind, impartial, dedicated to the national cause, unsullied by factional
strife or career competition. Moreover, it was positively beneficial to retire when factional and ideological
struggles became embittered, or when circumstances did not warrant resort to his methods. By reserving his
political fire he protected himself from alignments and the activities which could have damaged his national
reputation and restricted unbearably his freedom to manoeuvre.

His conduct in the decision-making processes of the Congress, his career in the national movement and his
efforts to control the political forces of the country for the good of the masses amply reveal his view of power.
He acquired political power not because this was his only aim for participation in politics. But he realized that it was an effective means for service to his people. It was acquired through service, by identifying himself with the lowliest in the country and by rising above his own self-interest. This is also evident from his approach to life and politics.