CHAPTER XI

MASS AWAKENING

The Satyagraha movement was an All-India one, but it found its vortex in the Punjab because it was the most war-weary province in the country. O'Dwyer had overdone his job and had choked public feelings by using repressive measures for four-and-a-half years of the war. When the war was over and the Punjab Government continued to behave during the last stages of the war, the virile Punjabis saw in the Satyagraha movement a way out for their salvation. They topped the country in organising protest meetings against the Rowlatt Bills, and thus demonstrated to the British Government and to their own brethren living outside the Punjab that if the Punjabis had been stop in organising support for the British during the war, they were equally on the forefront of those who had now chosen to assert Indian's rights after the war.

The agitation against the Bills commenced in February and ultimately extended to every town of importance in the Central and South-Eastern Punjab. In its earlier stages this

1. D.I.C.E., Vol. VI, p. 134: Altogether there were about 200 hartals and protest meetings on 30 March and 6 April throughout India. The greatest success, however, was obtained in the Punjab where 73 hartals and meetings took place. Even the much larger province, the United Province, lagged behind where only 66 meetings could be held.

agitation was largely in the hands of the old guards of the Provincial Congress Committee and of such bodies as the "Indian Association" at Lahore but later the leadership passed into the hands of the educated young men of extremist views. The most prominent of them were lawyers but they were backed by the sympathetic encouragement of the commercial and trading classes in the towns.

The young educated leaders drew a great deal of their inspiration from the articles published in the nationalist Press which had shown from the very beginning its uncompromising opposition to the Rowlatt Bills. In March 1919 when the more important of the two Bills was in its final stage the Tribune had written:

"No civilized Government would adopt a policy of repression in the teeth of opposition from public. There are now two ways open to us. One is that we should, like the dead, put the noose of this law round our necks, bury in oblivion our ever fair name, as also that of our great men, and sound the death knell of the so-called liberty of India. The other is that we should afford proof of our life by refusing to accept the law in question."

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Another paper, the Punish Despan, had called upon the Indians to show that they were not prepared to accept a law "calculated to gag their mouths, close their eyes, and bind them hand and foot". After the bill was passed, the West wrote "There will now be caused such unrest in the country no parallel to which will be found in the history of the world".

From the very beginning of the agitation, the nationalist press had started publishing cartoons and articles about the act which tended to add to the general impression of its unjust character. The West of Amritsar published on 20 March a cartoon showing "the Secretary of State in the act of handing the order of liberty to India, when a black cobra, released from a basket by Mr. Roxlatt, bites her". Further cartoons showed the "funeral of liberty" and depicted an Indian soldier, who, on return from the war as a hero, got an iron box for a reward.

Numerous meetings were held to protest against the Act. The main grudge of the speakers who would address these meetings was that the Act had put unjustifiable power into the hands of the police. Soon the most popular catchword of the opponents of the Act was that the new statute would permit "no vakil, no dalil, no appeal". The Act was

7. Ibid.: Quoted from the West, 29 March 1919.
represented as the typical product of the bureaucracy bent on crushing India, inspite of her services during the war. At a mass meeting hold at Amritsar on 23 March, a speaker said:

"The Boars bite like ants but the British bite like scorpions. When they are in need of help they take it, and then forget it. It was said that this bill was intended for a few men only. If this was the case why did the bureaucracy place it like a hanging sword over the heads of all Indians to harass them? ... If the bureaucracy after the experience of a reign of 150 years over this country could not control ten or twenty revolutionaries, it ought to select another country to rule over."

At another meeting, it was emphasised with a biting irony that the Act constituted India's sole reward for loyalty during the war and that the talk of the Britishers of Reform was hypocritical. The frustration of the people was reflected in one of the speeches made at another meeting:

"We were encouraged by the Government and our hopes rose. We used to think that we should be given self-Government and that both Hindus and Muhammadans would be reigning over our country. We used to think that we would make progress in the world, that our children would receive such education as we wished.

10. Rowlatt Act was nick-named by the Punjabis as "Rowla Sahib" meaning trouble-shooter.
and that they would be ready with everything for their nation and country, but we see with regret that all our hopes have turned into dust. As soon as the war has ended, instead of self-government this Act is imposed upon us."

People freely gave vent to their suppressed feelings which had been bottled up for a long time because the war had not allowed even the mildest expression of it. The following arguments became very popular with public orators:

"In the world war only fifty lakhs of people died, but one crore and ninety lakhs have died of starvation in India. Stores of grains in India are the greatest in the world, but unfortunately they are not in the hands of Indians.... Ordinarily he who is given food by anyone will not injure him but the bureaucracy passes bills like this though we feed them. The thirty crores of Indians are not dacoits; a pleader can be procured for a dacoit, but cannot now be procured for you.... Government says do not speak, do not write, do not have weapons, and be deaf."

Yet such remarks and criticism of the government (which was taken for granted as a familiar feature of every civilized country and which was the British way of life at home) might

13. Ibid.
lead to violence, the speakers would seldom fail to hammer the
point that violence had no place in their peaceful agitation.
The audiences would be called upon to sacrifice their lives,
if necessary, than resort to violence. A typical example of
the exhortation to that effect was:

"Let the sword cut fall, but you should not
even move an eye;... let fetters and hand-
cuffs be your ornaments, let prisons be your
mosques and temples; then indeed shall freedom
kiss your feet."

Generally speaking, all the papers, whether Indian or
Anglo-Indian, gave the widest publicity to the protest
meetings, although for different reasons and to serve opposite
purposes.

In the midst of such excitement when the government
finally passed the Rowlatt Act, Gandhi felt he must step up
the tempo of protest against the government. With the twin
purpose of giving a fillip to the Satyagraha movement and
prepare the people for a collective action in the future,
Gandhi called upon the people to observe fast and hartal on a
fixed day /all over the country. A misunderstanding, however, occurred
about the exact date for the purpose.

Reports (February to April 1919), pp. 15-20.
16. Ibid.
It was believed in many parts of the Punjab that Sunday, 30 March, had been fixed by Gandhi for the general demonstration against the Act. That belief subsequently proved wrong, but on that day itself a complete hartal was observed at Amritsar and Sultan, and in some towns of the districts of Porosepur, Goshigpur and Karnal. The hartals at Amritsar and Sultan were proclaimed by the Lahore papers on the following day as big triumphs for their organisers.

The hartal at Amritsar was followed in the evening by a mass meeting of about 40,000 enthusiastic people in which organisers saw to it that the speeches made were, on the whole, of a moderate nature. The only passage which the government could find objectionable in the whole proceedings of the meeting was a part of Dr. Kitchlew's speech. He said that it would be immaterial for the Punjabis if they were sent to jails, and that they should prepare themselves for the service of the country by following the lines suggested by Gandhi in his programme of Satyagraha.

On 30 March, Delhi had also observed a hartal which went out of the control of the organisers. The Satyagrahis demonstrated in the streets and failed to contain the resultant excitement. Partly because of that but also because of the

19. Ibid., p. 40.
incitement given to the demonstrators by those responsible for maintaining law and order there was a melee at places resulting in firings.

The people in the Punjab took the Delhi incidents as outrage committed by the authorities and treated those who were killed in the firing by the troops as martyrs. The courageous example of Swami Shraddhanand, bearing his breast and challenging the troops to shoot at him, gave great confidence to those who had so far harboured doubts on the tenets of Satyagraha and its efficacy in politics. The people of the Punjab, however, unlike those at Delhi, continued to remain calm and did not react violently either to the Delhi happenings or to the numerous orders served by the provincial government. One of them on 4 April had forbidden political leaders to speak in public. Instead of defying the order the organisers in the Punjab concentrated their thoughts on making the hartal on 6 April a success.

Strenuous efforts were made to organise the hartal, on even more complete lines, throughout the Punjab on 6 April, which had been actually fixed by Gandhi for the observance.

24. O'Malley, M., India as I knew It, p. 203; Memorandum on the Disturbances in the Punjab, April 1919, p.3.
of nation-wide hartal. With a view to preventing what had happened at Delhi they took particular care to insist on the people remaining peaceful on that day. The result was that when the hartal was observed in almost all the towns of Punjab on 6 April it was completely peaceful, and a great success. According to the Government of India,

"On the 6th April, the observance of the Hartal was much more general. It passed off peacefully. It was almost universal in the towns of the United Provinces and the Punjab."

The tremendous success that the Satyagraha movement achieved on 6 April brought about an instantaneous change in the political scene. On the one hand, it encouraged Gandhi to embark on further programme of defying selected laws with confidence and on the other enraged the governments of India and Punjab to take drastic actions against those who were leading the movement, before it was too late to do so.

From the very beginning of the agitation against Rowlatt Bills, the attitude of the Government of India was similar to that of a powerful master towards a humble and weak slave who had, of late, developed symptoms of defiance to his master's commands. On 6 February, the Viceroy in his opening speech of the Imperial Legislative Council had assured the bureaucracy that their position, status and future prospects would be safeguarded vis-a-vis the impending political reforms.

That was to encourage the officials to handle any situation likely to be created by the agitation, then in offing, with an iron hand. Little did the Viceroy care that this encouragement to bureaucracy was likely to produce an adverse political effect on the mass of Indians who now started viewing the statement of Chelmsford on the impending reforms with grave suspicion and mistrust. In an appraisal of Indians' psychology at that time, Viceroy himself reported to the King-Emperor on 14 February that from the side of Indians "we lose that desire to cooperate which existed while the war had yet to be won." At the moment, he felt, that attitude of the Indians had made it all the more necessary to pass the Rowlatt Bill. He wrote to the King-Emperor:

"We have every intention of putting this legislation (Rowlatt Bill) through and must face the odium."

The Government of India was obviously determined to flout Indian opinion and brush aside whatever the Indians might say in the press or on the platform. Instead of meeting the situation by ameliorating the distress of the people, the Government had chosen, perhaps consciously, to provoke the Indian people. The aim of the Government then was to restore its powerful image damaged a bit by the Home Rule movement and the consequent August Declaration during the war. To achieve this end, the Government of India allowed the local

29. India in 1912, p.27.
30. Chelmsford Papers, Roll 1, No. 26, Viceroy to H.E., the King-Emperor, dated 14 February 1912.
31. Ibid.
Jullundur, O'Dwyer was more emphatic in his demands on the Punjabis. Reminding the people of the fate of the Ghadarites had met four years earlier, he said:

"The Ghadar movement shewed the danger of uncontrolled political agitation working on ignorant and credulous minds, and I would take this opportunity of impressing on all who are connected with political movements in this province the necessity of scrupulously avoiding anything tending to create discontent among the people or to sow distrust between them and the Government which has trusted them and which they have always trusted."

The threats of O'Dwyer, none too veiled, failed to frighten the people. Instead, they continued to drift away from the government and were soon swept away by the Satyagraha movement inaugurated by Gandhi in March 1919.

The unconcerned way in which the Punjabis ignored his appeal enraged O'Dwyer and made him perhaps the keenest of all the bureaucrats in India to stage a show down as early as possible. But being a seasoned administrator and a calculating man, before using the mighty force at his command, he wanted to make out a reasonable case so that the use of force might subsequently look legal and justified vis-a-vis a movement which claimed to be basking itself on moral grounds and had been wholly peaceful and orderly. With that end in view he

referred the matter to the Legal Remembrancer to the Punjab Government for his expert opinion and advice.

The Legal Remembrancer, as was expected, suggested a way out for O'Dwyer by equating passive resistance with conspiracy. He opined:

"Even in its purest form the Passive Resistance (Satyagraha) movement, which preaches disobedience to certain laws as a means of procuring repeal of a particular law is, in my opinion, a conspiracy to do a legal act by illegal means: much more is it a conspiracy where, in pursuit of the object and in order to achieve that object, act of misrepresentation intended or likely to excite hostility to Government or acts of intimidation directed against particular individuals are committed.

There can be no doubt that people taking the Satyagraha vow form an association in the meaning of section 15 (1) the Criminal Amendment Act 1908, just as they are conspirators in the accepted sense of term.

The tendency in the Punjab is for the conspiracy to become a criminal conspiracy in the meaning of section 120-A, Indian Penal Code, and... the Governor-General in Council would be quite justified in notifying the association as unlawful under section 15 (2)."

36. Underline is mine.
This opinion of the Legal Remembrancer which dubbed a perfectly peaceful agitation as a criminal conspiracy, served O'Dwyer's purpose. He must have thanked Legal Remembrancer for his brilliant interpretation of the criminal law of the land. As will be seen later, it encouraged O'Dwyer to make a determined bid to crush the national awakening among the Punjabis through the merciless use of the power at his command.

The cities of Lahore and Amritsar had to bear the major part of the brunt of O'Dwyer's design. Of late these two cities had been attracting special notice of the Lieutenant-Governor because their inhabitants had shown keen interest in Gandhi's movement. Amritsar had been chosen as the venue of the next Congress session and had beaten even Lahore in hectic political activities. Under the dynamic leadership of two young men, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satya Pal, the city had become the storm-centre of Satyagraha movement in the province. Both of them were highly educated and were looked upon as extremists in the Indian National Congress. The extent of annoyance that Amritsar caused to O'Dwyer is evident from the 'confidential' statement that he made before the Hunter Committee later on:

"On 12th March I drew the attention of the new Deputy Inspector General, Criminal Investigation Department, to the serious state of affairs..."

38. O'Dwyer later defended his actions on the basis of this very opinion of the Legal Remembrancer before the Disorders Inquiry Committee which is also popularly known as Hunter Committee after the name of its Chairman.


40. Satya Pal had a medical degree of the Punjab University and Kitchlew had a Ph.D. degree from a German University (Hunstor).
generally and to the need of keeping a closer
watch on Lahore and Amritsar agitation, getting
him to send special agents to watch events at
Amritsar. From further information received I
asked Colonel Irving, Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar,
again to warn Kitchlew and Satyapal and told him
I was prepared if necessary to pass restriction
orders against them or deport them. At his suggest-
on that he could bring them round by persuasion I
withheld those orders for a time. But as Colonel
Irving's warning like previous warnings had no
effect, on 25th March an order was served on Satyapal
and on 4th April on Kitchlew and 3 others forbidding
them to speak in public."

O'Dwyer was bent upon nipping the movement in the bud and to
achieve that end he began using all the conventional methods
which in British Bureaucracy was adopt in those days. The bureau-
cracy under him had already won over the moderates and tried
for some times to torpedo the Satyagraha movement by enticing
those who were at the moment the pillars of that movement.
Then, however, it miserably failed almost everywhere and a
successful hartal took place at Amritsar and at some other
towns on 30 March, O'Dwyer felt very angry. On 1 April
speaking to a distinguished gathering at a garden party in

which were present judges, leading men, barristers, and pleaders, he referred to the political stir in the two cities and warned those who were sponsoring and sympathising with that stir of the dire consequences awaiting them.

Soon after this speech, with a view to build up a case, O'Dwyer referred the issue of hartal to the Legal Remembrancer and obtained the following opinion:

"Where there was a combination to secure the shutting of shops by the use of criminal intimidation or force there is without question a criminal conspiracy, but the question is whether a hartal organised without intimidation or force is illegal. I am of the opinion that it is. A hartal as we have seen connotes that there is an assertion of 'oppression' or 'exaction'... and it would appear also that the intention of the person making the assertion, whether by word or gesture, was to excite disaffection. That is to say, even hartal in its purest form would appear to be a seditious act.

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We know... that in the Punjab at any rate hartal meant something very much more than an

42. The garden party was given by the Hon'ble Judges on the opening of the High Court in the Punjab. Several of the Legal practitioners prosecuted later were present in the meeting.

orderly combination.... Hartal in its strict meaning is intimidation and violent crime as a conspiracy."

This view was naturally welcomed by the Punjab Government and enabled O'Dwyer to dub a peaceful agitation as criminal conspiracy. To discourage the hartal O'Dwyer got 75,000 copies of the Rowlatt Act distributed on 5 April, but to his great dismay and chagrin, Punjabis, particularly the urbanites, did not pay any heed to them and demonstrated a sense of complete allegiance to their leaders by observing a successful hartal on 6 April in all the major towns of the Punjab. O'Dwyer's anger now reached its peak.

On 7 April 1919, while speaking in Punjab Legislative Council, he frowned on the urbanites with the following observations:

"... a section of agitators who kept very much in the background during the war when loyal citizens were helping to fight the common enemy, are now coming forward to show their valour by attacking Government and its agents and endeavouring to intimidate and coerce the quiet law-abiding people by their propaganda of so-called passive resistance. I have already said publicly that the Punjab repudiated what is or was known as 'passive


45. On the same date O'Dwyer, at a garden party given in his honour by the Chiefs' Association, was heard advising politicians to desist from hartal.
loyalty. It will repudiate even more emphatically that veiled disloyalty which, while hiding itself under the cloak of passive resistance, leads on its dupes into open defiance of authority and the penalties which such defiance entails."

Then he showed a sense of injured pride and continued to say:

"The British Government which has crushed foreign foes and quelled internal rebellion, could afford to despise these agitators, but it has a duty of protection to the young and the ignorant, whom they may incite to mischief and crime, while themselves standing aside. I, therefore, take this opportunity of warning all, who are connected with political movements in the province, that they will be held responsible for the proper conduct of meetings, and which they organize, for the language used at the consequences that follow such meetings."

What O'Dwyer intended to do subsequently was hinted in the same speech in the following words:

"The recent puerile demonstrations against the Rowlatt act in both Lahore and Amritsar would be ludicrous, if they did not indicate, how easily the one ignorant and the credulous people, not in a thousand of whom knows anything of the measure, can be misled. Those who want only to mislead them,

incur a serious responsibility.... Those who appeal
to ignorance rather than to reason have a day of
reckoning in store for them."

These utterances of O'Dwyer give a clear indication of how the Satyagraha movement had reacted upon him. It is evident that he had developed a big antipathy against the movement and its organizers and was bent upon to crush the movement at the earliest opportunity. The only problems confronting him at the moment, however, were how and when to use the force especially when the movement was a peaceful one and the public leaders and their followers were not giving him any chance to do so. To find out an opportunity or occasion and some sort of pretext were two necessary preliminaries. Fortunately for him, or so he must have believed, the things soon moved in such a way that they supplied him both the opportunity as well as the pretext.

On 7 April, Gandhi and his Satyagraha Sabha encouraged by the success of hartal of the previous day formally inaugurated the Civil Disobedience which they chose to call Satyagraha, by issuing an unregistered paper in defiance of the Indian Press Act. They also made available to the prospective satyagrahis and the general public some books which

49. P.I.E.P.D., 7 April 1919, p. 201. Underline is mine.

49. Reporting about the proceedings of the hartal on 30 March at Amritsar, City Inspector Ashraf Ali Khan pointed out to his superiors that "the situation passed off smoothly for the evident reason that police did not interfere with them."

had been proscribed by the government.

The Government of India, then at Calcutta, took a very serious note of the information and wired to the local governments that if there was a clear case of breach of the law, Gandhi and his accomplices should be prosecuted. It further advised the local governments on 9 April that if the passive resistance movement showed dangerous symptoms in any province the local governments might issue a manifesto condemning those who seek 'notoriety' by embarrassing the government and making it clear to them that the government was determined to maintain the laws of the country and deal with all movements most rigidly.

Meanwhile, the Government of India received the information that Gandhi had left Bombay for Delhi on the night of the 8th. No sooner it received this news than the Government of India got in touch with the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab and the Chief Commissioner of Delhi by telephone and after consultation, authorised them to send Gandhi back to Bombay under the Defence of India Rules. It was clearly mentioned that force be used if Gandhi refused to obey the order.

51. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XV, p. 198: Their object was "to select laws whose civil breach could constitute an education for the people, showing them a clear way out of the difficulties that lie in the path of honest men desiring to do public work", and "to select such books and pamphlets as are not inconsistent with Satyagraha, and which are, therefore, of a clean type and which do not, either directly or indirectly, approve of or encourage violence."


53. Ibid.

On the same day (9 April) O'Dwyer's hands were further strengthened by a letter he received from Miles Irving, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. It has surveyed the state of Amritsar in such a way that it could justify O'Dwyer taking drastic steps, of course much to his satisfaction.

In his letter, Miles Irving had complained that within the city of Amritsar, the influence of the new Congress leaders, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, was far greater than that of the government officers. It was because of their leadership that the hartal on 6 April had "passed off peacefully" and so ended a day which, Irving confessed, a London policeman would have described as a "picnic", but:

"Unfortunately we are not in London and I regard the situation with very grave concern.... On the 6th the strike was a triumph of organization and proved that the party of anarchy can on less than 12 hours' notice have the whole city at their command in the teeth of the so-called leaders. This strike I consider to be merely testing the organization. It will be followed, I venture to prophesy, by further and severer tests, until the day, when... the people will be ordered to go to jail by thousands. Who are at the bottom of this I cannot say. The

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55. The letter was dated 8 April and was addressed to the Commissioner of Lahore Division. An advance copy of the letter had been sent to Michael the same day. The letter was under the active consideration of O'Dwyer on 9 April.

Congress Party are on the outer circle. They passed a resolution against the strike, and promptly came to heel when Kitchlew ordered it. Kitchlew himself I regard as the local agent of very much bigger men. Who those are can only be guessed from their rage at the Rowlatt Act which strikes at the root of organised anarchic crime."

Apprehending that from one cause or the other people were ripe for revolution, Viles Irving suggested ways and means to meet it. He advocated strong preventive actions in the city of Amritsar immediately. He wrote:

"The first point I want to press urgently is the necessity for an increase in the military forces... Secondly we cannot go indefinitely with the policy of keeping out of the way, and congratulating ourselves that the mob has not forced us to interfere. Every time we do this the confidence of mob increases; yet with our present force we have no alternative. I think that we shall have to stand up for authority sooner or later by prohibiting some strike or procession which endangers the public peace. But for this a really strong force will have to be brought in and we shall have to be ready to try conclusions to the end to see who governs Amritsar....

Thirdly, we know (a) that we need expect no warning of a movement affecting the whole city, and (b) that the so-called leaders have lost all confidence... the Khan Bahadurs and Sai Sahibs are dead."

As the follow-up action on Irving’s letter was being carefully considered by O’Dwyer, news poured in the Government House, Lahore that Ram Mauni festival was being celebrated jointly by Hindus and Muslims on that day in almost all the towns of the Punjab with greater vigour and enthusiasm than ever before.

The Ram Mauni which had been celebrated on 9 April was a Hindu festival of some importance to the people living in the urban areas of the Central Districts of the Punjab, such as Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Gujranwala and Lahore. As the authorities had not taken any steps to interfere with the celebration, it had passed off as peacefully as the hartal of 6 April. That was not to the liking of Michael O’Dwyer. What had piqued him was that the urbanites in the province had celebrated this Ram Mauni everywhere as a 'national solidarity day' and made it an occasion for scenes of public

53. "Ibid., Vol. VI, p.3.
60. Ibid., pp. 83-84.
fraternisation between Hindus and Muhammadans.

The underlying cause of the Hindu-Muslim fraternity shown in the Ram Naumi demonstration deserves some comment. The religious animosities between the two communities had been less marked in the Punjab ever since the war had broken out. As we have already noticed even in the agrarian disturbances in the South-West Punjab of 1915, the underlying motive of attack on the village Hindus was more politically-economic than religious. But after that for four years a political rapprochement between Hindus and Muhammadans had been a feature of the National Congress, the Muslim League and the Home Rule Movement. Close cooperation was the dominant feature of the Congress and League sessions held at Delhi at the close of 1918. All the Punjab towns were imbued all the more by that spirit since the start of the Satyagraha. In all the meetings preceding the general hartal of 6 April constant allusion had been made to the necessity of 'unity' and the meetings had resounded with the cry of 'Hindu-Musalmun ki jai'. While the majority were


For example, an Indian officer of high standing, and himself an eye-witness to the Ram Naumi celebrations at Amritsar, while reporting on the celebrations pointed out "the very high pitch which the feelings of the people against the Government had reached" and stated that to him it "appeared not a religious but altogether a political function." In Lahore, the officers had regarded the Ram Naumi procession as of a "highly seditious and inflammatory character."

G2. Porcup Mohan, An Imaginary Rebellion and How it was Suppressed, pp. 26-27; Memorandum on the Punjab Disturbances, April 1919, pp. 83-84.
acclaiming the name of Gandhi, the stauncher Muhammedans joined with his the names of the Pan-Islamist internees, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Speakers and newspapers alike made much of the growing spirit of unity between the two communities, and at Amritsar, in particular, every effort had been made by the Congress Committee to enlist Muhammedan support by demonstrating sympathy with the Turkish cause. The celebration of Ram Nauri gave an opportunity for more practical demonstrations of unity. In the principal towns the Muhammedans joined in celebrating the festival, and the cry of Hindu-Jussalmans Ki Jai was substituted for that of the acclamations in the name of Hindu deities.

On the Ram Nauri celebrations at Amritsar the Hindus drank formally out of vessels held by Muhammedans; at Lahore drinking booths were erected for the common use of both communities; at Batala the crowd had the names of Ram and Allah, and the word 'Om' stamped on the clothes they wore.

The novel celebrations of Ram Nauri of 1919 considerably added to the general excitement that already existed. If it did not exhibit itself in the outbursts of racial feelings against the Europeans that was because of the commanding influence the public leaders had over their followers.

63. Memorandum on the Disturbances in the Punjab, April 1919, p. 42.

To O’Dwyer the news of Hindus and Muhammadans joining hands to give the impression of one compact nationality indicated a dangerous move on the part of the Punjabis against the British. He was grievously hurt to witness that his hold over public opinion was swiftly passing into the hands of agitators. He was now fully convinced of the truth in Irving’s observations that “every time we do this [standing aloof] the confidence of the mob increases”, “we shall have to stand up for our authority sooner or later”, and “to try conclusions to the end to see who governs Auritisar”.

Having come to that conclusion, O’Dwyer made up his mind to take drastic steps against the Satyagraha movement in the Punjab even though that might involve his working out a special strategy for the purpose. The city of Auritisar was on the forefront of political agitation in the Punjab, its leaders and citizens, therefore, were chosen to be his first target under that strategy.

The action subsequently taken by O’Dwyer are indicative of the strategy he followed in order “to try conclusions”. He issued orders under the Defence of India Rules, directing Irving to deport the two leaders, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, to Dharamsala. Orders were

also issued by him to get Gandhi arrested as soon as his train enters Punjab territory and to send him back to Bombay. On the same evening of 9 April, O'Dwyer took General Beynon, G.O.C., 16th Division, Lahore, into confidence and verbally informed him that he expected trouble at Amritsar on 13 April and wanted the General to make adequate military arrangements to face it. The strategy of O'Dwyer was thus clear. By the removal of leaders from the midst of their followers, O'Dwyer aimed at either frightening the latter or provoking them to the point of violence so that the military machine would be set into motion to break their morale. Either way he was to achieve his object.

As had been clearly calculated by O'Dwyer, the deportation of Satyapal and Kitchlew did create the desired situation in Amritsar. The public temper shot up to unprecedented heights. On the morning of 10 April, when

67. Under this order Gandhi was arrested at Patiala on the night of 9 April, and sent back to Bombay. The news became known in Ahmedabad on the morning of 10 April as a result of which a riot broke out there. The news reached Punjab towns in the afternoon which raised resentment of people there against O'Dwyer.


69. Ibid. On the night of 9 April, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar Miles Irving, had also calculated the situation likely to be arisen as a result of deportation of the doctors the next day, and had taken a number of measures to guide and control it.
news of deportation spread to the city, shops were closed, the people gathered in large numbers, formed a procession and started wending their way to the Deputy Commissioner's office to demand the release of the two beloved leaders. To begin with the procession was quite orderly and peaceful and on its way showed no hostility or racial hatred against any one, but when the procession was fired upon by the police and military contingents it ceased to be peaceful. It was soon infected with mob-frenzy and turned violent against everything British. The excited members of the procession soon murdered white people, assaulted a white lady (Miss Sherwood), burnt banks and post offices and destroyed Town Hall and a Mission Church. They cut the telegraph wires and damaged a lot of government property.

What had happened at Amritsar threatened to repeat itself at Lahore and few other towns of the Punjab and for a time tense atmosphere prevailed over the province.

One of the inevitable consequences of this atmosphere was the sense of insecurity among the trading class and that brought the business in the towns to a standstill.

70. Memorandum on the Disturbances in the Punjab, April 1919, p.5.
74. O'Dwyer, M., op. cit., p.275.