CHAPTER X

1921 DISTURBANCES IN DHARWAR
(Dharwar Shooting Incident on 1st of July 1921)

GROWTH OF NATIONALISM

India's political aspirations were not satisfied by the Govt. of India Act of 1919. The Indian National Congress in its special session condemned the Montague Chelmsford Report as inadequate, disappointing and unsatisfactory. The political struggle for Independence continued. The Indian demand gradually grew more and more insistent. The Congress adopted the well-known resolution on Non-cooperation movement in 1920. It recommended the boycott of law courts, Legislatures and Government educational institutions. Further it defined

3. Ibid.
its object as the attainment of Swaraj - self-rule. Gandhiji was on the helm of the affairs of the Congress. He converted the national movement into a popular and a sort of revolutionary movement. He received a good deal of response from the masses. The Non-Cooperation Movement was accentuated by two events — atrocities in Punjab and Khilafat agitation.

At the time of the First World War the Indian Press Act underwent a considerable change. It became much repressive at the instance of Rowlatt; and hence it was popularly known as Rowlatt Act. Its provisions empowered the Govt. to arrest any person and detain him without trial. As a protest against the Rowlatt Act Gandhiji organised Passive Resistance. Strikes and demonstrations — at times rioting also — became the order of the day. The Government pursued the savage repressive policy in breaking the movement. It broke up a large meeting in Jalianwala Bagh at Amritsar. General O'Dyer fired 1600 rounds into the crowd. According to an estimate 1208 persons were

2. Ibid.
wounded and 379 were killed.

The defeat of Turkey in the World War I, offended the religious sentiments of the Muslims. They adopted an aggressive anti-British attitude. The two Big Brothers — Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali and Maulana Azad organised a mass movement of the Muslims. This is known as Khilafat Movement. A widespread discontent had already prevailed in the country. The Jalianwala Bagh Tragedy at Amritsar had stirred the soul of India. Now, Gandhiji exploited an opportunity to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity. He supported the Khilafat Movement. It is recorded that there was "unprecedented fraternisation between the Hindus and the Muslims."

Non-cooperation

The movement received great enthusiasm and support throughout the country. Legislatures were boycotted. The students came out of schools and colleges.

1. Ibid, p. 579.


3. Ibid.
The mass rioting and demonstrations, strikes and unrest spread everywhere. They burnt the foreign cloth and expressed the sentiments of Swadeshi. The Congress held its session at Ahmadabad in December 1921. It took steps to organise Civil Disobedience Movement and made a grim determination to continue the programme of Non-violent, Non-Cooperation Movement. The Congress appointed M. Gandhi to lead the national movement. There was a remarkable rise of enthusiasm throughout the country.

The year 1921 thus marks a landmark in the history of India's struggle for freedom. The response of Karnataka leaders to the Non-Cooperation call was remarkable. Gangadhar Rao Deshpande, and Srinivas Rao Kaugalgi came to Dharwar to spread the message of Non-Cooperation Movement, which evoked a hearty response in the different parts of Karnataka. The four-fold constructive programme was taken up all over Karnataka. The Congress resolution on Non-Cooperation had its repercussions in Karnataka as in other parts of India.

1. Ibid. p. 25.
2. Ibid.
The lawyers who gave up their practice included Vithal Rao Joshi, Alur Venkat Rao, Venkat Rao Mudwedkar, Kadapa Raghavendra Rao, K.B. Ankalgi, Gadigeyya Honnapurmath (all from Dharwar), Vishwanath Rao Narayan Rao Joshi of Hubli, D.R. Majali and Karaguppikar of Belgaum, Srinivas Rao Kaujalgi and Dewasaheb Janvekar of Bijapur, Karnad Sadashiva Rao of Mangalore and others. Some Karnataka leaders such as Vinayak Rao Babaji Joshi, B.A., Retired Educational Inspector of Southern Division, Dharwar, Vishwanath Rao Joglekar of Karajgi and others renounced their Govt. titles.¹

A large number of students came out of schools and colleges. The people of Karnataka supported in a large measure the object of Indian National Congress — attainment of Swaraj — as the goal. The two contemporary events — Jallianwalla Bagh and Khilafat movement created a great upsurge in the country. The Muslims had adopted an aggressive anti-British attitude. There was already wide-spread unrest among the

¹ This information was made available in course of an interview with Sri. Narasing Narayan Bhise, Social Worker, Dharwar on 10th August 1967.
Industrial workers at Bombay from the beginning of 1919. All the contemporary events excited the feelings of the people of Karnataka. One such outstanding event—Shooting Incident at Dharwar—deserves special mention. In the meantime Hindu-Muslim unity had been achieved as a result of the Khilafat movement which was wholeheartedly supported by M. Gandhi. Both Hindus and Muslims vigorously started the picketing of liquor and toddy shops and anti-drink campaign all over Karnataka.¹ There was a vigorous picketing and rioting at Dharwar on the 1st July 1921.

Picketing near liquor shops, begun spontaneously by the people, was taken up vigorously by the Khilafat and the Congress Committees and the personal visit of the Collector to the liquor shop may be taken as proof of its success. When the movement began, there was a certain amount of violence in the shape of the drinkers being made to ride donkeys, faces being besmeared with tar.

By the advice of Maulana Mohmad Ali the Khilafat took up the matter in hand. They formed Jamaits in Mohallahs to whom were reported the cases of those who drank. They fined only such people. As it was found that the shops could not be picketed the whole time by honorary pickets, the paid volunteers were appointed with strict instructions to avoid all violence and use only persuasion, entreaties and to simply note down the names of the drinkers and report them to the Jamaits. In the month of April, the Congress workers also joined the movement. As this movement began to be effective, the liquor contractors began to make all manner of false reports to the police, to abuse and illtreat volunteers and in the end violently assaulted Mr. Cuttal a pleader while picketing. Although the police were indifferent before, since the arrival of the then D.S.P. Mr. Marston
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at the end of April 1921 there began a series of prosecutions against volunteers at several places in the district, for robbery. One of such cases against two volunteers was decided on 1st of July 1921 (Exh. 103 A) who were sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment, because they caught the D.S.P. 's Bhangi drunk and recovered with his consent from him annas 13 as fine which was credited in the Khilafat accounts.

1. Report of the Inquiry Committee, Appointed by, the Working Committee, of the All-India Congress Committee to Inquire into, the Firing by the Authorities, on the Crowd at Dharwar, on the 1st of July 1921; Commissioners: Abbas S. Tyabji, Retired Chief Justice, High Court, Baroda, S.S. Setlur, Advocate, Some-time Judge, Chief Court, Mysore, M. Bhawani Shankar Niyogi, Advocate, Nagpur, pub. R.S. Hukkeriker at the Office of the District Congress Committee, Dharwar, 1921, p. 5.
One day a Bhangi had been made through remonstrance and social ostracism to pay a fine of thirteen annas for getting drunk and to promise to abstain from drinking thereafter. ¹

The volunteers practically organised themselves in all the places and engaged in these activities even at the risk of lathi charges and arrests. It may be said without exaggeration that the volunteers in addition to conducting their movement played a vigorous part in picketing the liquor shops, which was a speciality of Dharwar Volunteers. As a sequel to this picketing the police charged two Khilafat volunteers who were sentenced to hard labour for six months. Merciless beating of volunteers and lathi charges were resorted to by the police. As a reaction to this, grave dissatisfaction prevailed in the town. One day a huge crowd gathered in front of the toddy and liquor shops near the Police Station to protest against the

false police charges of looting and sentence. The picketing of liquor shops went on more vigorously than before on that day. The contractors of the liquor shops launched a complaint to the police authorities. The Town Faujdar came to the spot. He gauged the situation. He thought of earning gratification of his officers by taking revenge against those who had defied his authority. He tried in vain to disperse the crowd. He issued an order to disperse. But the crowd knew very well that Faujdar had come without the prior permission of the Magistrate. So it remained unnerved. The Faujdar also knew very well that if he took recourse to firing without the permission his officers would approve his action as the policemen then were never treated as doing any thing wrong. The Government was in the hands of a trained bureaucracy. So the Faujadar ordered the police to open fire. The police dispersed the crowd by shooting. Three persons were killed and several were injured on the spot. The police defended their action on the ground of self-defence. They represented that the disorderly crowd did not disperse inspite of the order being issued, and that it had become unruly. The police also produced witnesses stating that hooliganism was rampant and disorder became rife in the public street,
and the people had lost their patience. As a result twenty-nine persons were arrested. Though Mudweed Venkat Rao had gone to the spot later in order to render help and assistance to the wounded he was involved in the case, arrested and convicted for three years. A Special European Magistrate was appointed as Committing Magistrate who held his court in a building within the precincts of Juvennilo Jail at Dharwar. After the inquiry he let off two persons — Krishnaji Hanamanth Mudwedkar, Editor, "Karnataka Vritta" and "Dhananjaya" and Abdul Khadar Imamshab out of 29 who had been arrested. Among the two, Krishnaji Hanamanth Mudwedkar was the one who on the very day and at the very time of shooting roused the people into action through his Kirtana at Halyal (Karwar District). The Committing Magistrate sent the remaining 27 to the Sessions Court, Dharwar for trial. The sessions judge who tried the case acquitted four persons — (1) Ranganath Ramachandra Diwakar,

1. This information was made available in the course of an interview with Shri. Narasing Narayan Bhise, Social Worker, Dharwar, on 10th August, 1967.

2. Ibid.
Editor, Karmavoera, Dharwar. (2) Hanamanth Rama Rao Desai, Inamadar, pleader, Municipal Councillor, and Member, District Local Board, Dharwar. (3) Gopal Rao Dhonda Rao Deshpande, Inamadar, Municipal Councillor Dharwar. (4) Madar Sab Husseinsab Katgar; and 23 others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment ranging from one to three years, who were:

(1) Anant Shrinivas Dabade, (Saraf, Congress propagandist.)

(2) Trimalrao Krishna Joshi (sometime picket.)

(3) Waman Dinakar Jathar (Proprietor, Kanakaditya Press, Dharwar.)

(4) Annacharya Balacharya Hoskeri (Editor 'Vijaya' and Proprietor Vartahar Press, Dharwar.)

(5) Madhvacharya Krishnacharya Kalker (Newspaper Vendor.)

(6) Madhwa Shrinivas Kamalapur (Congress Propagandist.)

(7) Madnava Rao Bnia Rao Kabbur, M.A., LL.B., Pleader (Printer and Publisher, Karmaveer.)

(8) Imam Hussein Maniyar (Member, Khilaphat Committee.)
(9) Muhammad-sab Abdulhamid Soudagar (Secretary, Khilafat Library.)
(10) Usman Kashim Dadasab Mulla.
(11) Sultanmohidin Budansab Raydurg (Clerk, Khilafat Committee.)
(12) Damodar Vishwanath Herlekar (Chairman, Municipality, Dharwar.)
(13) Sheikh Mohidin Allisab Darji (Secretary, Khilafat Committee.)
(14) Abdulla Husseinsab Khalasi, (Chairman, Khilafat Committee.)
(15) Abdulkhader Hayatsab Attar, (Member, Khilafat Committee.)
(16) Mohmmadhussein Khadrmohdin Rotiwala, (Volunteer, Khilafat Committee.)
(17) Abdul Rahiman Abdulsalam Rotiwala, (Member, Khilafat Committee.)
(19) Narasingh Narayan Bhise (Congress Propogandist)
(20) Shalambhat Khandbhat
(21) Abdulkhader (Volunteer, Khilafat Committee.)
(22) Abdul Vajuddin Daroga, (Volunteer, Khilafat Committee.)
(23) Buden Chandulal Chapparband.¹

Thereafter the working committee of the All India Congress appointed a committee to inquire into the incident. The relevant resolution runs thus:

Resolved that a committee consisting of the following gentlemen be appointed to inquire into the firing by the authorities on the crowd at Dharwar on the 1st of July and the full circumstances connected therewith and to make report thereon within a month:

(1) Sri. Abbas S. Tyabji
(2) " Bhavani Shankar Niyogi
(3) " S.S. Setlur

That the Secretary of the Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee be required to serve as Secretary for the purpose.²

¹ Report of the Inquiry Committee appointed by the Working Committee of the All India Congress Committee to inquire into the Firing by the authorities on the crowd at Dharwar on the 1st July 1921, Commissioners: (1) Abbas S. Tyabji, Retired Chief Justice, High Court, Baroda (2) S.S. Setlur, Advocate, some-time Judge, Chief Court, Mysore. (3) M.Bhawani Shankar Niyogi, Advocate, Magpur, pub. R.S. Hukkerikar, at the office of the District Congress Committee, Dharwar, 1921, p.1.

² Ibid.
The Committee came to Dharwar on 16th August 1931:

In pursuance of this resolution, Sri Abbas S. Tyabji and B. Niyogi arrived at Dharwar, on the 16th of August 1931 and forthwith informed the District Magistrate and the District Superintendent of Police of Dharwar that the Committee intended to commence inquiry into the circumstances of the firing by the Dharwar police on 1st July in accordance with the aforesaid Resolution and invited them to participate in the proceedings, if they so desired, by offering evidence relevant to the purpose of the inquiry and by the cross-examination of witnesses examined before the Committee on behalf of the public of Dharwar. His Excellency, the Governor of Bombay too was informed of this request by an urgent telegraphic message. A general invitation by a notice which was printed and distributed broadcast in the city was issued to the public to place before the Committee such evidence as may be pertinent to the inquiry. All necessary stops were thus taken to ensure that no evidence available in any quarter was shut out.  

1. Ibid.
After the inquiry, the Committee submitted
the concluding report as under:

Our conclusion is that the
firing ordered by the Sub-
Inspector Shivalingappa on
the evening of the 1st July
1921, on the crowds assembled
before the liquor shop and its
neighbourhood was unjustifiable
and far too drastic and exces-
sive to meet the requirements
of the situation and that the
firing after the Kitson light
was brought on the scene by
people who came to succour
the wounded was absolutely
brutal and without even a
semblance of a justifying
necessity.¹

Gangadhara Rao had been accused for a speech
made at Navalgund. He made the statement in the court
as under:

I do maintain that the greatest injustice
has been done in the Dharwar rioting case
as well as other picketing cases.²

1. Ibid., p. 21.
2. G.S. Halappa, History of Freedom Movement in
Karnataka, Vol. II, Govt. of Mysore
He characterised the atrocity as "Yama Rajya".

However the repressive policy of the Government could not suppress the national movement. The people continued picketing the toddy and liquor shops and anti-drink campaign vigorously as never seen before. An important feature of the Disturbances was that the spirit of Civil Disobedience, Passive Resistance Movement spread everywhere.