

## Handout 32: Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movement (NCM)

"Where God commands, I am a Muslim first, a Muslim second and a Muslim last, and nothing but a Muslim. But where India's freedom is concerned, where welfare of India is concerned, I am an Indian first, an Indian second and an Indian last and nothing but an Indian."

Muhammad Ali

"The fight that was commenced in 1920 is a fight to the finish, whether it lasts one month or one year or many months or many years."

Mahatma Gandhi

In the long list of anti-British movements, the **NCM was the first major pan-India struggle**. Started on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1920, it carried the active anti-British struggle to new heights. The year 1920 is very significant in the history of India's freedom struggle. In that year **Gandhi emerged as the undisputed leader of the Indian National Congress** and the decision to launch a non-violent non-cooperation movement against the British rule was taken. It was a **crucial new departure from the policy of petition and prayer**, earlier pursued by the elitist early Congress.

NCM was **initially started by Khilafat committee** under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, while Congress joined the struggle later at later point of time and both movements merged.

### Background

A new political situation was created by the **First World War**.

- The First World war gave a **tremendous impetus to nationalism** all over Asia and Africa. Nationalism gathered its forces, and the nationalists were expecting major political gains after the war.
- During the war, **Indians provided resources** and manpower to the British Empire in the hope of self-government after the war. **However, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms (1919) were found to be wholly inadequate.**
- The **economic situation took a turn for the worse**: The economy was hit by a post-war global depression. All sections of Indian society were suffering from economic hardship.
  - The **prices** of essential commodities skyrocketed.
  - The **workers** had no job and they lived in great poverty.
  - The **peasants**, groaning under poverty and high land revenue, also felt the pressure.
  - The Indian **industrialists** were very unhappy as they demanded protection for their industries through high tariff and government aid.
  - The **educated** middle class too, was struggling hard against the problem of unemployment.

Thus, The stage was now set for a broad-based movement.

### **Rowlatt Acts (1919) and the Rowlatt Satyagraha**

The colonial rulers followed a **dual policy of conciliation** (Montagu Chelmsford Reforms) and **repression** (Rowlatt Acts) to cope with the growing pressure of the national movement.

- **Rowlatt Acts (Feb 1919)**

- The Acts allowed certain political **cases to be tried without juries and permitted detention without trial**. Their object was to replace the repressive provisions of the wartime Defense of India Act (1915) by a permanent law.
  - Based on the report of Justice S.A.T. Rowlatt's committee of 1918.
- These Acts were passed in the Imperial legislative council even **though every single non-official Indian member opposed it**.
  - The British Indian Government was determined to arm itself with more coercive powers. They curtailed the civil liberties of the Indians in the name of crackdown on terrorist violence.

- **Sparked off a movement of protest**

- The Rowlatt Act was taken as a great **blow to the honour of the Indian nation**.
  - At the end of the war, while Indians were expecting substantial constitutional concessions, all they got was the Rowlatt Acts. The Act gave immense power to the police, and naturally created panic.
- Almost **all political parties opposed** Rowlatt Act. Even moderates like Surendranath Banerjee recorded their reservations about the Act. Jinnah, Madanmohan Malavia and others resigned from the legislative council in protest against the Rowlatt Act.
- To launch a strong movement against the measure, a **Satyagraha Sabha** was formed under the leadership of **Gandhi**.
  - Gandhi became its president, used the members of Home Rule League, as they were not satisfied with Annie Besant and Tilak had gone to England. Gandhi also used Pan-Islamic group like Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal (Lucknow), Ali brothers, Wazir Hasan, Raja of Mahmudabad, Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, etc.
  - The Satyagraha Sabha published propaganda literature and collected signatures for a Satyagraha pledge. Gandhi toured Bombay, Delhi, Allahabad, Lucknow and a number of South Indian cities between March and early April.
  - Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha took India's struggle for freedom to a new height. The Satyagraha Sabha **decided to stage civil disobedience movement** in India. It urged the nationalists to participate in processions, meetings, demonstrations and court arrest. On March 30, 1919 Gandhi called for a nationwide strike, however, the date was later changed to **April 6<sup>th</sup>**. This was the **first all-India hartal/strike**.

- The following instructions were issued for Satyagrahis:
  - The signatories are of the opinion that the Rowlatt Bill is unjust and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals. The signatory solemnly affirms that he will **refuse civilly to disobey** certain laws.
  - The Satyagrahi will, during the struggle, fearlessly adhere to **truth and ahimsa** (non-violence) and will never misrepresent anything or hurt anybody's feelings.
- However, many Nationalists, especially members of the Imperial Legislative Council though opposed Rowlatt Act but were **firmly against Satyagraha**. They were: D.E. Wacha, Surendranath Banerji, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Srinivas Sastri. But the wind was blowing in the other direction, especially **in Punjab where Rowlatt Satyagraha was most effective**.
  - The reasons were:
    - Unrest in Punjab caused by food grain **price rise** of 100% between 1917 and 1919, while **artisan wages** went up only by 20-25%
    - A **Muslim awakening** that was inspired by poetry of Zafar Ali Khan (father of Urdu Journalism) and Iqbal (Sare Jahan se Achha)
    - Activities of the **Arya Samajists**.
    - **Hindu, Muslim and Sikh unity**
  - The people responded to his call in an unprecedented way and in their exuberance certain violent acts in Delhi, Lahore and Amritsar were committed.
  - The period saw **police firing, severe coercion and brutal crackdown** on the activists. The authorities were alarmed, and they appealed to Gandhi for cooperation.
  - Gandhi was arrested on April 9, 1919, and protest processions were taken out, which were fired upon in Amritsar resulting in the death of some people.
- The movement reached its **climax in the Jallianwala Bagh** massacre on April 13, 1919.
  - On the day of **Baisakhi** (harvest festival) thousands of people, mostly from nearby villages had gathered at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar to celebrate their harvest festival (April 13, 1919). Most of the people were unaware of the fact that the city was under curfew. Some leaders and their followers also gathered in the same Bagh to protest against the arrest of their leader **Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal Malik**.
  - General Dyer, who was in-charge of the operations, had issued an order prohibiting meetings and demonstrations. He took it as a violation of his order and directed his troops to open fire. **No warning** was issued to the unarmed, peaceful and unsuspecting crowd before the shooting. The Government estimate showed **379 deaths**, other estimates were higher.
- The brutality of massacre at Jallianwala Bagh shocked the nation and **Gandhi decided to call the movement off** on April 18, 1909. Gandhi confessed that it was his 'Himalayan blunder' and observed a three-day fast to atone his blunder.

- The massacre exposed the true nature of a colonial rule. It was condemned worldwide.
    - Rabindranath **Tagore returned his knighthood** to condemn this assault on humanity.
  - Not satisfied with that, **martial law** was declared in Amritsar and indiscriminate flogging and firing followed. At some places, people were even asked to **crawl like reptiles**. This was the greatest insult to the honour, dignity and self-respect of the people. This further alienated the people and in fact infuriated them.
  - Despite so much bloodshed and protest the British Indian Government did not care to repeal the Rowlatt Act.
- **Significance**
    - The Rowlatt Act **destroyed the moral foundations** of the British Empire in India. The movement is particularly important because it strengthened the determination of the Indian nationalists to fight back. It **boosted the self-confidence of a nation in the making**. Herein lies the importance of the movement.
    - The movement **established Gandhi as the most important Indian political leader**. The failure to get Rowlatt Acts abolished made Gandhi realise the need for an impersonal political organisation such as the Congress. His next step was to take over Congress leadership.

## Khilafat Movement

The Khilafat agitation was launched in 1920 over the question of the future of Turkey which was a defeated power in the War. It marked the highest watermark in the entire history of Hindu-Muslim unity during the anti-colonial struggle.

### **Historical Background**

The Sultan of Turkey was the Khalifa or the Supreme head of the Sunni Muslims of the World. As the religious head, the caliph was also to look after Muslim religious places located in Arabia. Therefore, the political future of the Khalifa became a matter of grave concern to such Muslims in India.

Several major political developments occurred during the second decade of the twentieth century, which laid down the foundation, as well as shaped the course, of the Khilafat movement.

- **First World War:** Turkey joined the war against the Allied powers.
  - **Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, gave an assurance** to the Indian Muslims that the British Government was not fighting against Turkey in order to deprive her of the territories that rightly belonged to the Sultan.
- **Post-War settlement:** The Ottoman empire suffered a major defeat in the war.
  - The fear gripped the Indian Muslims about the impending dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim religious places to be taken away from the purview of the Caliph and even his own status would be adversely affected.
  - To put pressure on the English, French and Americans, the Khilafat movement was launched in many Muslim countries and thus became a Pan-Islamic movement.
- In India, this led to the formation of the **Khilafat Committee** in March 1919.
  - **Leaders:** Ali brothers-Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and his elder brother Shaukat Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, etc
  - There were two groups:
    - Bombay Group: favoured memoranda and delegation to press for its demands.
    - Delhi Group led by the Ali Brothers: favoured agitational methods.
  - The Khilafat Committee chose **Gandhi as the President** and urged the Indian Muslims not to take part in the victory celebrations of the First World War.
  - The Committee threatened the British Government with complete boycott and non-cooperation if the problem of Turkey was not solved.
- In **Delhi meeting (Nov 1919)** of **All India Khilafat Conference**, the Khilafat Committee reached a consensus on launching all India **Civil Disobedience Movement**. The agitation was to be launched in November 1919 under the leadership of Gandhi.
- **Why did Gandhi take up the Khilafat cause?**
  - After the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhi got involved in the Khilafat Movement, in which he saw a **splendid opportunity to unite the Hindus and Muslims in a common struggle** against the British.
  - Gandhi was convinced that the Khilafat cause was a right cause and that the Muslim demand was a **just demand**.
  - He had a **soft corner in his heart for the Ali Brothers**, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Saukat Ali. Both were imprisoned when the movement started.

- Gandhiji's **perception of the British rule changed** due to Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
- In a surcharged political environment that the **Amritsar Congress** met in **December 1919**.
  - President – Motilal Nehru
  - The Amritsar Congress, despite finding the reforms as 'unsatisfactory' and 'inadequate', expressed its willingness to give a trial to it.
  - It was decided between the leaders of the Congress and the Khilafat Committee that the Khilafat agitation would be continued under Gandhi's leadership.
  - It was further decided that a delegation would be sent to the Indian Viceroy to impress upon him the justness of the Khilafat cause.
- **Mohammad Ali presented a charter of demand before the diplomats in Paris in March 1920.** The demands were:
  - The Turkish Khalifa must retain control over the Muslim sacred places.
  - The Khalifa must be left with sufficient territory to enable him to defend the Islamic faith, and
  - The Jazirat-Ul Arab (Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Palestine) must remain under the Muslim sovereignty.
- **Two major developments took place in May 1920**, which added further fuel to the fire: acceptance of the Hunter Committee Report and publication of terms of the Treaty of Sevres.
  - **Hunter Committee Report**
    - It was setup by the government to enquire into the Punjab massacre, under pressure.
    - The Congress, not satisfied with the terms of reference of the committee, had set up its own enquiry committee. It found the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as nothing but **well-calculated, and cold-blooded murder of innocent**. It demanded **adequate compensation** for the families of the dead and the wounded.
    - **But the Government** ignored this report and accepted the majority view of the Hunter Committee, in May 1920. It **exonerated all officials** involved in the massacre.
    - The majority observations
      - The Government **defended General Dyer's brutal acts as an error of judgment** and Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Governor of Punjab, was allowed to go totally scot free.
      - An English newspaper of England 'The Morning Post' even collected fund to defend General Dyer.
      - The Upper House of British Parliament-House of Lord praised General Dyer.
    - That sealed the fate of any rapprochement between the government and the people of India.
  - **Treaty of Sèvres: Ottoman Empire was to be divided.**
    - It was to lose the entire rich area of Asia Minor.
    - The Arab Provinces such as Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt were severed from the empire which were in the Turkish Empire were to be mandated territory under the British and French tutelage.

- Sultan was to be deprived of the leadership of the Muslim masses. He was to become a virtual prisoner of the Allied High Commission.
- The coincidence of the acceptance of the Hunter Committee Report and the publication of the Treaty of Sèvres turned out to be the **proverbial last straw on the back** of both Gandhiji and the Muslim leadership led by the Ali brothers. It **turned Gandhiji from being a loyalist to a non-cooperator**, as he himself admitted in the course of his trial in 1922. Gandhi issued a statement on May 18, 1920 on behalf of the Khilafat Committee in which he called upon the disappointed Muslims to launch a non-violent movement on the two issues of the **Khilafat wrong** and the **Punjab wrong**.
- The **Khilafat committee** met in **Allahabad** in **June 1920** to chalk out a **plan for non-cooperation on an All-India basis**.
  - It decided upon a fourfold boycott programme.
    - Boycott of the **titles** offered by the government.
    - Boycott of **civil service, army and police**.
    - Boycott of **schools and colleges**.
    - Boycott of **law courts**.
  - This virtually amounted to **total non-cooperation with the Government**.
  - This meeting was attended by many of the Congress leadership including Gandhiji. They extended their unstinted support to the Khilafat proposals. **Gandhi insisted that the movement must be non-violent in character**, and no one should be forced to join the agitation.
- The Khilafat Committee started the mass movement on August 1, 1920, and made Mahatma Gandhi their leader (same day as NCM). Gandhiji got the Congress Working Committee to extend support to the non-cooperation movement on three issues: **Punjab wrongs, Khilafat wrong** and the **Swaraj**. He followed it up by successfully seeking support for the same from the **Calcutta and the Nagpur Congress**.

### The Course of the Khilafat Movement

- A **deputation** under the leadership of Dr Ansari called on the **Governor-General** to apprise him of the hurt feelings of the Muslims but nothing came out of it.
- **Ali brothers** went to **England** and other countries to seek support for the cause of Khilafat, but they returned empty-handed.
- In **UP**, some Muslims took it as a general revolt against the authority, taking Khilafat in its literal sense of opposition.
- **Millennial hopes** were aroused among Muslims.
- In **Malabar**, the Moplahs indulged in violence against the Hindu zamindars.
- In June 1920, about 20,000 Muslims, tried to do **hijrat** by leaving India en masse and migrating to Afghanistan in anger against the government.

Soon, the Khilafat Movement became a part of the Non-Cooperation Movement and along with Gandhiji, the Ali brothers emerged as prominent leaders of the movement. However, after the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Gandhiji, on 11 February 1922, the Khilafat Movement also lost its initial momentum.

What gave it a big blow was the new leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Turkey who abolished the office of Caliph. Thus, the very basis of the movement was taken away and the movement died a natural death.

## Non-Cooperation Movement

### **Causes:**

- The deteriorating **economic conditions** in the post-war period had generated a ground swell of anti-government feeling.
- Popular discontent were three immediate issues: **Khilafat wrongs, Punjab massacre** and '**inadequate' nature of the reforms** under the Act of 1919.
- Publication of the **Treaty of Sevres** with Turkey and acceptance of **Hunter Committee report** precipitated the issue.
- The **Khilafat Movement** was already on.

### **Launch of the movement:**

**Banaras meeting** of AICC (June 1920) it was also decided to seek the opinions of the provincial Congress committees on the sensitive issue of non-cooperation.

- Though there was general support in favour of non-cooperation among the provincial committees, but there was some reservation on the issue of the boycott of the Council election which was getting due under the 1919 Act.
- Gandhiji made it amply clear that he favoured launching of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

When **Gandhiji had approached Tilak**, seeking his support on the issue of satyagraha, Tilak was *sceptical about its efficacy, though he did not oppose it*. Besides, Tilak was not very enthusiastic on the issue of support to the Muslims on the Khilafat issue, and he passed away on 1 August 1920.

As decided earlier, the Non-Cooperation Movement was **formally launched on 1 August 1920**. Many fasted in the memory of Tilak and participated in the demonstrations and hartal as a part of the movement.

### **Calcutta Special Session of Congress (Sept 1920):**

- President: Lala Lajpat Rai
- It was with this mixed bag of support:
  - Leaders like C.R.Das, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipan Chandra Pal did not agree with the idea of boycott, especially of Councils.
  - Only Motilal Nehru, among veterans supported Gandhi.
- But Gandhiji was determined to pursue his line of action even in the face of the old guard's opposition. Mahatma agreed that by the adoption of Non-cooperation resolution, **Swaraj might be attained within a year**.
- Finally, Gandhi's resolution on non-cooperation was passed. **Gandhi succeeded in getting his resolution, favouring the launching of the Non-Cooperation Movement**, passed with a massive majority: 1886 delegates favoured his resolution while only 884 opposed it.
  - The Congress favoured **seven forms of boycott**, namely, (1) boycott of titles and honorary offices, etc.; (2) boycott of the official and semi-official functions held by the government; (3) boycott of schools and colleges; (4) boycott of legal courts; (5) boycott of recruitment for service in Mesopotamia; (6) boycott of the Council's election and also boycott of voting, and (7) boycott of foreign goods.
  - As an integral part of the Calcutta resolution on non-cooperation, there was also a **programme of constructive work**. It included promotion of Swadeshi (national

system of education, private arbitration courts, swadeshi goods, and hand-spinning and hand-weaving of clothes), removal of untouchability and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity.

In pursuance of the Calcutta conference, there was a **general boycott of the Council's election held in November 1920**, both at the candidates as well as on the voters' levels.

#### **Annual Nagpur Session of Congress (Dec 1920)**

- **President: C. Vijayaraghavachariar**
- Gandhiji gained further support, even from among the old guard of the Congress.
  - Both CR Das and Lala Lajpat Rai, who had earlier opposed the non-cooperation resolution at the Calcutta Congress, lent unstinted support to it.
- Change in **goal and means** of Congress.
  - Its earlier goal of the '**attainment of self-government by constitutional means**' was replaced by the '**attainment of swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means**'.
  - Now, non-violent satyagraha, as an extra-constitutional means of mass struggle, came to be accepted as the legitimate method.
  - Thus, the Nagpur Congress **endorsed the program for non-cooperation** (ratified the Calcutta resolution) and the general dissociation from the Government at various levels along with the non-payment of taxes.
  - Gandhi declared that if the non-cooperation programme was implemented completely, **swaraj would be ushered in within a year**.
- **Restructuring Congress's organisation:**
  - Formation of the **15-member working committee** to look after the day-to-day work of the organisation;
  - Set up an **All India Congress Committee (AICC)** with 350 members;
  - Re-organisation of the **Congress Provincial Committees on a linguistic basis**;
  - The organisation of the Congress to be built at **village, town, tehsil and district levels**, along with the provincial and national levels; and
  - the Congress was to launch a **membership programme with a symbolic fee of only four annas**. This was the first major attempt to reach out to the common man. Thus, Congress was made a mass-based organisation.

Thus, the Congress came very near to the Gandhian vision of the constructive and combative programmes and Mahatma Gandhi became its tallest leader.

#### **Course of the Non-Cooperation Movement**

##### **Initial phase**

Backed by the Nagpur Congress, the programme of non-cooperation soon gathered momentum. The people responded to the movement with a lot of enthusiasm.

- The **Council election** was successfully boycotted.
- **Titles and honours** were renounced on a massive scale.
- A number of prominent legal practitioners like Motilal Nehru, CR Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C Rajagopalachari and a score of other legal **luminaries left their legal practice**.
- Several **institutions of national education** like Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Bihar Vidyapeeth, Kashi Vidyapeeth, Vishwa Bharati University by Tagore and National College, Lahore came

up to provide education to those young students who had earlier left their schools and colleges. Jamia Millia Islamia (first at Aligarh and later shifted to Delhi) was also established.

- Eminent persons like Subhas Chandra Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev, Rajendra Prasad, Dr Sampurnanand and others became teachers at these national institutions.

### Vijayawada Meeting

In the background of such a massive response to its non-cooperation programme, the All-India Congress Committee met at Vijayawada April 1921. AICC decided to concentrate its attention on the collection of the **Tilak Swaraj Fund**, securing a membership of one crore Congress members and distribution of 20 lakh charkhas by June 1921.

Once again there was a warm popular response to the Congress programme: The Tilak Swaraj Fund was oversubscribed, and 50 lakh Congress volunteers were enrolled.

### More Boycotts:

- **Boycott of foreign clothes was the most successful program of NCM.** From July 1921 onwards the attention of the Congress shifted to the boycott of foreign clothes. Clothes and other foreign (mainly English) goods were collected and burnt in public.
  - During this movement, Gandhi started wearing dhoti and shawl and earned the name 'naked fakir'. (22 September 1921, Madurai meeting, as his desire to identify with poor masses)
- Gandhi's **village development programme** was highly successful in Bihar mainly '**charkha**' and **khadi** programme.
- **Picketing of toddy shops** also became very popular which led to the decline of the Government revenues.

### Among Muslims

- July 1921 was marked by an important development. **Muhammad Ali was arrested** as he had made a declaration that Muslims could never accept the fact of working in the British Army as it was against their religion. His arrest by the government led to widespread protests, and a large number of the Congressmen repeated the same statement forcing the government to ignore the whole issue.
- **The Moplah Uprising**
  - Unfortunately, in August 1921, the Moplahs of the Malabar attempted to establish **Khilafat kingdom** which soon it took a **communal turn**, and in the process hundreds of Hindus were killed, or and their properties were looted, and many atrocities were perpetrated, including forced conversions to Islam. The number of forcible conversions went up to 2,500 and the death-toll among Hindus went up to 600.
  - Soon repressive measures by the government followed. Several Moplahs were killed, and a large number of them were wounded. At one stage 45,000 of them were being held as prisoners. Strong measures, ultimately, resulted in the control of the situation.

### Tribal participation:

- **The Tana Bhagat sect** of Chota Nagpur tribals boycotted liquor.

- The non-cooperation in **Rajasthan** was scattered and was related with the local peasant and tribal issues. The Bijolia movement in Mewar, the Bhil tribal movement under Motilal Tejawat and the Meos of Alwar who attacked police station in Gurgaon (December 1921) are a few examples.

#### **Peasant participation:**

- **No Tax Movement** was also started at many places like Midnapore (Bengal), Charala-Pirala and Pedanandipadu Taluqa (A.P). Peasants in many parts of Bihar and U.P refused to pay revenue. They believed that Gandhi Raj had come and there is no longer necessity to pay anything to anybody.
- Agrarian riots were organised in Rae Bareli, Pratapgarh, Faizabad, Sultanpur (January-March 1921) under the leadership of **Baba Ramchandra**.
- Madari Pasi in Hardoi, Bahraich, Bara Banki and Sitapur, led **Eka Movement**.
- Haats (local market) were looted at various places like Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Munger, and Purnea in January 1921. A powerful anti-zamindar peasant agitation in **Darbhanga estate**, was organised in 1920.
- Apart from peasants, nationalist leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, G.B.Pant, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Purshottam Das Tandon, and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi were also active in U.P during Non-Cooperation Movement.

#### **Akali Movement:**

The Akali fight in Punjab against the corrupt Mahants and British officials over the Sikh Gurudwaras (Shrines) was part of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

- In November 1921, the British official refused to hand over the keys of the Golden Temple treasury to the Akalis. Thousands of Sikhs joined the Akalis and forced the British to hand over the keys and released the prisoners by mid-January 1922.
- The Akali struggle, however, continued till the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Act of November 1925 established Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committees' (SGPC) control over the Gurudwaras.

#### **Further escalation:**

It was also decided to boycott the visit of the **Prince of Wales** in November 1921. During the visit, another unfortunate incident took place in Bombay between Christians and non-Christians.

All this convinced the Congress leadership that the country was not yet ready for mass civil disobedience. Thus, in November 1921, All India Congress Committee authorised the provincial committees to start civil disobedience on their own responsibility.

#### **Government Repression**

Soon the government changed its strategy and went whole-hog in the use of repressive measures. It declared the Congress and Khilafat works as unlawful activities. Congressmen responded to this challenge and many Congress workers and leaders like **CR Das, Maulana Azad, Lala Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and others were arrest** and were put behind bars. Altogether, 25,000 Congress and Khilafat workers were behind bars.

#### **Annual Congress, Ahmedabad, 1921**

- President: Hakim Ajmal Khan

- It was in such a surcharged atmosphere that the Congress met at Ahmedabad, and it called up its members to suspend all other activities and volunteer themselves for arrest. Mahatma Gandhi was made its sole executive and things started moving fast.

**Gandhiji sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy** Reading on February 1, 1922, and demanded among other things, the release of political prisoners, and the removal of restrictions on the press. In case the demands were not met, he informed Viceroy that he intended to start civil disobedience in Bardoli in the form of non-payment of taxes.

Meanwhile, on 4/5 February 1922 an unfortunate incident occurred at **Chauri-Chaura** village in the district of Gorakhpur in eastern UP. Gandhiji was shocked beyond measure by the unfortunate turn of events, and he withdrew the movement on 11 February 1922.

#### **Why did Gandhiji withdraw the movement??**

- People have not learnt the method of Nonviolent protest fully** and without proper understanding the movement was turning violent as the incident like Chauri Chaura showed. A violent movement could be easily suppressed by the colonial regime.
- The movement was also **showing signs of fatigue**. This was natural as it is not possible to sustain any movement at a high pitch for very long.
- The central theme of the agitation—the **Khilafat question—also dissipated** soon, as Kemal Pasha abolished the system and a secular state was formed.
- Growing Hindu-Muslim divide** due to revolts like *Moplah* etc.

This withdrawal proved that at this stage Gandhi did not want to lead a movement which he could not control, and it also proved that the nationalists would heed Gandhi's call, for **though there were many who differed from him**, no one thought of defying his call for withdrawal. Subsequently, his decision was endorsed by the Congress Working Committee.

Soon after the withdrawal of the movement, Gandhiji was arrested on 22 February 1922 and was put on trial on 18 March 1922. He pleaded guilty to all charges and was awarded six-years imprisonment.

#### **Criticisms of the Non-Cooperation Movement**

The Non-Cooperation Movement and its undisputed leader, Mahatma Gandhi, had been subjected to severe criticisms on various counts.

<b>Issue of Non-violence:</b> Gandhi's decision to withdraw the movement on 11 February 1922 in the wake of the violent incident of Chauri-Chaura	
<p>Thousands of young men and women, who had put everything at stake in this first major battle for Swaraj, were thoroughly disappointed. More so, as the leader (Gandhiji) had earlier promised Swaraj within one year and the act of withdrawal came as a great anti-climax.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the tallest among our national leaders, called it a 'national calamity'. "<i>To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some historians looked at it more as a <b>matter of strategy</b> rather than that of principles. In their view, the continuation of the movement, after it turned violent at Chauri Chaura, would have drawn sharp repressive measures from the government leading not to a decisive battle for Swaraj but futile sufferings, sacrifices and even demoralisation among the masses.</li> </ul>

<p><i>was reaching the boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RP Dutt, a Marxist historian, looked at the issue of the withdrawal of the movement at the light of 'class interest' and not on the issue of violence.</li> <li>Even Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his 'amazement'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>However, for Gandhiji it was not a matter of strategy As he himself put it '<i>I would suffer every humiliation, every torture, absolute ostracism and death itself to prevent the movement from becoming violent.</i>' Thus, for Gandhiji it was a <b>matter of principle</b> and not a matter of strategy.</li> </ul>
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#### **Issue of Muslim Communalism:** Mixing of religion and politics

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gandhi failed to realise that the Khilafat was an <b>extra-territorial issue</b> which cut at the very root of Indian nationality. By emphasising that the Khilafat cause was a just cause Gandhi admitted that the Indian Muslims belonged to a separate nation.</li> <li>Muslim leadership was primarily inspired by their <b>pan-Islamic sentiments rather than the felt-need of Indian nationalism</b>. It was a <b>tactical move</b> on their part to seek the support of When Khilafat became a non-issue in view of the abolition of the office of the Caliph by the Turkish leadership, Ali brothers and Maulana Abdul Bari fell out of the mainstream of the national movement and even became critical of Gandhian politics.</li> <li>It is argued that by lending support to the Khilafat Movement, Gandhiji unwittingly <b>lent undeserved respectability to Muslim communalism</b>, strengthened religious bigotry. During the movement, the services of mullahs and maulavis were used in a big way for the popular mobilisation of the Muslim obscurantist masses, leading to their consolidation based on Islamic religiosity. The forces, thus, unleashed by the Khilafat Movement retarded the growth of secular politics in India. It ultimately led to the partition of the country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gandhiji was working to lay the <b>foundation of a free, pluralistic and united India</b> and for that goal, a united national movement was the basic need. Both the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation Movements should be viewed in that <b>larger Gandhian perspective</b>.</li> <li><b>Gandhiji was not the progenitor of the Khilafat Movement: he just lent his support to it.</b></li> <li><b>For Gandhiji, religion and politics were twins</b>, deriving strength from each other, rather than being mutually exclusive. His principle of sarvadharma samabhava hardly differed from a secular view of politics.</li> <li>For Gandhi, <b>Hindu-Muslim unity had always remained as an article of faith</b> since his South African days. He stuck to his faith till the end, which reached its apogee during the dark days of 1946-47. If the critics still persisted with their doubts about his secular credentials, his martyrdom completely vindicated him.</li> </ul>
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Despite these criticisms, the Non-Cooperation Movement undoubtedly made significant contributions to further the ends of our national movement. **Contributions of the NCM:**

It was the 1<sup>st</sup> great mass movement in the history of India's anti-British struggle and it transformed the very character of anti-British struggle. It was not greatly radicalized with swaraj as a goal and widened mass-base, it also led to adoption of Gandhian methods of struggle and establishment of Gandhi as the supreme leader. It erased the fear of British rule from the heart and minds of people because people could see helplessness of British in front of Gandhian methods.

- **Political front: Departure in several ways**

- It marked the **emergence of the Congress** as the most powerful political organisation in the country. It became the central focus of the Indian nationalist movement.
- Previously, some of the political activities of Gandhi had been carried on independently of the Congress organization. But from now on **Congress and Gandhi became identical** in popular imagination.
- Though the movement failed to achieve Swaraj, it generated a **feeling of freedom among the masses**.
- **Swaraj** became the battle-cry of the movement. Although it was not yet well-defined, it caught the imagination of even the common men and women.
- The Congress was now committed to **all peaceful and legitimate means** for the attainment of Swaraj. The people had an unprecedented sense of empowerment and even the lowliest of the low was now equipped with a new weapon of satyagraha.
- With the non-cooperation movement there was a significant **shift towards mass-politics**. It was a great stride forward in the **growth of political consciousness** of the Indian people. The workers in the towns and the peasants in the villages were affected by the movement.
  - This change in Congress was not liked by some of its aristocratic leaders. The split between the conservatives and the liberals was now complete. The liberals accepted office under the government, became ministers and tried to fight and crush the Congress agitation. They were completely cut off from the people and developed a habit of looking at problems from the official point of view.
- As the leaders of the old generation were fading out, the movement **gave a new band of leaders** who successfully led the country to independence in 1947. Leaders like C Rajagopalachari, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Rajendra Prasad, Acharaya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan, B C Roy, T Prakasam, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, G B Pant, were the products of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Some of them even played a crucial role in laying the foundation of a free and democratic India in the post-independence era.

- **Economic front: Quite spectacular**

- Considerable **boost to handloom and khadi industries**, which was a positive development, both in terms of income and employment generation.
- Sharp **decline in the import** of British goods.

- Paved the way for peoples-led **self-help programmes** like village reconstruction, village sanitation, and revival of handloom and khadi industries.
- **Social front**
  - Some of its programmes, like **Hindu-Muslim unity and eradication of untouchability**, were concerted attempts to strengthen the social fabric of the country, resulting in the emergence of a united national movement.
  - **Prohibition campaigns** brought many women in the national movement - a group that started participating in the national movement for the first time in a big way.
  - A remarkable spread of the national movement in geographical terms: **new regions and new linguistic groups** were brought into the national mainstream.
  - New social groups and classes like the **peasants, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women** identified themselves with the national struggle.
  - **A number of local movements**, viz., Akali movement in Punjab, peasants movement in Midnapore in Bengal, Kanika in Orissa, Kheda in Gujarat, Gunter in Andhra, as well as the peasant movement in Awadh in UP and that of north Bihar also got integrated as part and parcel of the national movement. All these led to widening of the base of the national movement, both in spatial and social group terms.
  - The movement contributed significantly to the **liberation of women** because women participated in large numbers, and they fought shoulder to shoulder with their male counterpart. Indian women spontaneously came out from their homes to co-operate with the movement. In this connection, the names of Basanti Devi, Sarojini Naidu, Urmila Devi, Hemaprabha Majumdar and others deserve special mention. The social outlook towards women began to change after 1920.
- **Cultural front**
  - Several **institutions of national education** were founded, which became the mainstay of the national movement.
  - There was a **great cultural resurgence** in India: 'Indian-ness' became an idea, to have pride in. Thus, a new swadeshi spirit permeated throughout the length and breadth of the country.
  - The movement also attempted to build up a **bridge between the classes and masses**. Gandhiji started wearing only a loincloth during the movement. He became a symbol of peasant's simplicity, religious and spiritual humility, and political militancy--all these virtues blended in one.