



## 10<sup>th</sup> – Nationalism In India I

In India, the growth of modern nationalism is connected to the anti-colonial movement. People began discovering their unity in the process of their struggle with colonialism, the sense of being oppressed under colonial power was common to different classes. But each class and group, felt the effect of colonialism differently. The Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi tried to unite these groups together within one movement. But this unity did not emerge without conflict.

**The first world war, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation:** The First World War (1914), created a new economic and political situation worldwide. It led a huge increase in defence expenditure which was financed by war loans and increasing taxes; custom duties were raised and income tax introduced.

**Impact of the First World War on Society:** Between 1913 to 1918, the prices of food grains increased largely which led to extreme hardship for the common people. The peasantry suffered from heavy rents and taxes. Villagers were called upon to supply soldiers. This forced recruitment in rural areas caused widespread anger. After the war, foreign goods once again began to be imported and foreign capital began to be invested in a large scale. Indian industries faced heavy losses and even closure.

**Social Conditions after the War:** In 1918-19 and 1920-21, crops failed in many parts of India, resulting in acute shortage of food. There was also an influenza epidemic. According to the census of 1921, 12 to 13 million people died as a result of famines and the epidemic. People hoped their sufferings would be reduced after the war, but that did not happen.

**Emergence of Mahatma Gandhi:** In such critical social conditions, a new leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi appeared. He suggested a new method of action, and he was popularly known as Bapu or Mahatma Gandhi.

**Forced Recruitment** It is a process by which the Colonial state forced people to join the army. In colonies, people were often compelled to join the army and fight war on behalf of the colonial rulers. Satyagraha had yielded good results. Satyagraha was method of agitation and protest based on truth and non-violence. It was passive resistance consisting of defiance of laws, non-payment of taxes, boycott of government institutions, etc. It suggested that if the cause was true, if the struggle was against injustice, then physical force was not necessary to fight the oppressor. Without being aggressive, a Satyagrahi could win the battle through non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi believed that this dharma of non-violence could unite all Indians.

**Satyagraha in India:** After arriving in India, Mahatma Gandhi successfully organised Satyagraha movements at various places. The experiments in Satyagraha brought Gandhiji into close touch with the masses, both the peasants in the rural areas and the workers in the urban areas. In course of time, he became the symbol of the poor and the down-trodden people. Some places where Satyagraha really affected the society are given below

**Champaran (Bihar):** In 1916, Gandhiji travelled to Champaran in Bihar to inspire the peasants to struggle against the oppressive plantation system. Here, indigo planters were oppressed to grow indigo and sell it at price fixed by European owners.

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**Kheda (Gujarat):** In 1917, crops failed in Kheda district of Gujarat, people were suffering from shortage of food and plague epidemic so they asked for relaxation or reduction in the land revenue. But the government refused to remit land revenue and insisted on its full collection. Gandhiji supported the peasants and advised them not to pay revenue till their demand of its remission was met. This movement was a success as government issued instructions that revenue should be recovered only from those peasants who could afford to pay. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel accompanied Gandhiji in this movement.

**Ahmedabad (Gujarat):** In 1918, Mahatma Gandhi interfered in a dispute workers and cotton mill owners of Ahmedabad. He advised the workers to go on strike till their demands were met.

**The Rowlatt Act:** The Rowlatt Act, in 1919 was passed through the Imperial Legislative Council in spite of opposition of Indian members. Rowlatt Act gave the government enormous power to repress political activities. According to this act political prisoners could be detained in prison years without any trial. Gandhiji decided to try to oppose it with Satyagraha.

**Gandhiji's Opposition to Rowlatt Act:** Gandhiji opposed Rowlatt Act by non-violent disobedience civil movement. Rallies were organised in cities, workers went on strike in railway work shops were closed down.

6th April, 1919 was observed as Satyagraha Day when people all over the country observed fast and hartal. It was the first countrywide agitation by Gandhiji, and marked the foundation of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

To suppress the movement, the British barred the leaders from Amritsar, and Mahatma Gandhi from entering Delhi. On 10th April, the police in Amritsar fired upon a peaceful procession. It provoked widespread attacks on banks, post offices and railway stations. Martial law was imposed and General Dyer took command.

**Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre:** On 13th April, 1919, a large crowd gathered enclosed ground of Jallianwalla Bagh. It was an enclosed area in Amritsar, Punjab. Some people came here to protest against government's repressive measures while some came to attend the annual Baisakhi fair they were unaware of the martial law that was imposed. General Dyer entered the area, blocked the exit and opened fire on the crowd, killing hundreds. Dyer did this to 'produce a moral effect' and to create terror and awe in the minds of Satyagrahis. As the news spread, crowd took to the streets; there were hartals, clashes with the police and attacks on government buildings. The government responded with force to end the movement by humiliating and terrorising people. Satyagrahis were forced to rub their noses on the ground, crawl on the streets and do salaam to all Sahibs; people were beaten and villages were bombed. Rabindernath Tagore returned his 'Knighthood' in protest. Mahatma Gandhi called off the movement when he saw spread of violence.

**Khilafat Movement:** During the Rowlatt Satyagraha, Mahatma Gandhi felt that need to launch a more wide movement in India. But he was sure that no such movement could be organised without bringing the Hindus and Muslims closer together. One way of doing this, he felt was to take up the khilafat issue.

**Cause of Khilafat Movement:** The First World War had ended with the defeat of Ottoman Turkey. There were rumors that a harsh peace treaty was going to be imposed on the Ottoman emperor, who was the spiritual head of the Islamic



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world. The Muslims of the India decided to force Britain to change her Turkish policy. A Khilafat Committee was formed under the leadership of Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani. A young generation of Muslim leaders like the brothers Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, began discussing with Mahatma Gandhi about the possibility of the united mass action on the issue, Gandhiji saw this as 'an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Mohammedans as would not arise in a hundred years.

**Non-cooperation Movement:** This Non-cooperation programme was launched in 1920. Leaders like CR Das had mental reservations but Gandhiji's call for sacrifice and remuneration appealed to his emotions strongly. Thus, a Non-Cooperation Movement in support of Khilafat as well as for Swaraj was started.

At the Calcutta Session of the Congress in September 1920, Gandhiji convinced others leaders of the need to start a Non-cooperation Movement in support of Khilafat, and decided to start a Satyagraha on the Khilafat issue. The Non-cooperation Movement was the first mass based political movement under Gandhiji. In his famous book Hind Swaraj (1909), Mahatma Gandhi declared that British rule was established in India with the cooperation of Indians and had survived only because of this cooperation. If Indians refuse to cooperate, British rule in India would collapse within one year and Swaraj would come.

The Congress passed the resolution in its Calcutta Session in September 1920.

To gain maximum success, Mahatma Gandhi proposed a stage by stage strategy implementation for the movement

- The movement had to begin with a surrender of titles, honours and honorary posts by people.
- Planned to shun or boycott Civil Services, Army, Police, British Courts and Legislative Assemblies, School and Colleges and British goods.
- The British goods were to be replaced by domestic goods or Swadeshi to promote the native cottage industries.
- In case of government suppression, Civil Disobedience Movement will be launched.

After a lot of debates, the Non-Cooperation Movement was adopted by the Congress during the Nagpur conference in December 1920. Under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, Non-cooperation-Khilafat Movement began in full force.

**Differing strands within the movement:** The Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement began in January 1921. Various social groups participated in the movement with their own specific aspiration. All of them responded to the call of Swaraj, but the term meant different things to different people.

**The Movements in the Towns:** The movement started with middle class participation in the cities. Thousands of students left government controlled schools and colleges; headmasters and teachers resigned and lawyers gave up their legal practices. The council elections were boycotted in most provinces except Madras, where the Justice Party, (the party of the Non-Brahmans) felt that entering the council was one way of gaining some power. It was something only accessible to Brahmins.

**Economic Effect of Non-Cooperation Movement:** The effects of Non-Cooperation on the economic front were dramatic. Foreign goods were boycotted; liquor shops picketed and foreign clothes were burnt. The import of foreign clothes declined to



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half between 1921 to 1922, and its value dropped from 102 crore to 57 crore rupees. In many places, merchants and traders refused to trade in foreign goods or finance foreign trade. As the boycott movement spread, people began rejecting imported clothes and wearing only Indian ones. Thus, the production of Indian textile mills and handlooms went up.

**Slowing Down of Movement:** This movement in the cities gradually slowed down for a variety of reasons. Khadi cloth was more expensive than mill cloth, and poor people could not buy it. So, boycott of foreign goods could not continue for long. Similarly, boycott of foreign institutions too posed a problem. No alternative institutions were set up in their place. So, the teachers and students finally had to resume their studies and jobs in government schools. Lawyers joined back in government courts.

**Rebellion in the Countryside:** From cities, the Non-Cooperation Movement spread to countryside. In Awadh, the Peasant Movement developed under the leadership of Baba Ramchandra—a sanyasi. Earlier, he was an indentured labourer in Fiji.

This Peasant Movement demanded reduction of revenue abolition of beggar and social boycott of oppressive landlords. In many places, nai-dhobi bandhs were organised by panchayats to deny services to landlords of even barbers and washermen. In June 1920, Jawaharlal Nehru began around the villages in Awadh, talking to the villagers and trying to understand their problems.

By October, the Oudh Kisan Sabha was set up. It was headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba Ramchandra and others. Within a month, over 300 branches had been set up in the villages around the region. As the movement spread the houses of talukdars (Indian land-holders) and merchants were attacked, bazaars were looted and grain hoards taken over.

**Interpretations of Swaraj by Tribal Peasant:** Tribal peasants interpreted the message of Mahatma Gandhi and the idea of Swaraj in another way. They thought that Gandhiji had declared that no taxes were to be paid and land was to be redistributed among the poor. The strict forest law made the hill people angry. In the Gudum Hills of Andhra Pradesh, a militant gorilla movement spread under the leadership of Alluri Sitaram Raju. Inspired by the Non-Cooperation Movement, Raju talked of the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi and persuaded to wear 'Khadi' and give up drinking. At the same time, he believed that India could be liberated only by the use of force, not by non-violence. The Gudum rebels attacked police stations, attempted to kill British officials and carried on Guerrilla warfare for achieving swaraj. Raju was captured and executed in 1924, and gradually he became a folk hero.

