



drishti

Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement

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Introduction

- **Mass Movements:** Two mass movements were organized in 1919-1922 to oppose the British rule in India are the **Khilafat movement and the Non-Cooperation movement**.
 - The movements, despite having different issues, adopted a unified plan of action of **non-violence and non-cooperation**.
 - This time period saw the **unification of Congress and the Muslim League**. Many political demonstrations took place with the joint effort of both these parties.
- **Causes of the Movements:** The following factors served as the background to the two movements:
 - **Government Hostilities:** The **Rowlatt Act**, the imposition of martial law in Punjab and the **Jallianwalla Bagh massacre** exposed the brutal and uncivilised face of the foreign rule.
 - The **Hunter Commission** on the Punjab atrocities proved to be eyewash.
 - The House of Lords (of the British Parliament) endorsed General Dyer's action.
 - **Discontented Indians:** The **Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms** with their ill-conceived scheme of Dyarchy failed to satisfy the rising demand of the Indians for self-government.
 - **Economic Hardships:** The economic situation of the country in the post-War years had become alarming with a rise in prices of commodities, decrease in production of Indian industries, increase in burden of taxes and rents etc.

Almost all sections of society suffered economic hardship due to the war and this strengthened the anti-British attitude.

Khilafat (Caliphate) Issue

- **Turkey's Alliance against British:** The Muslims all over the world, including India, regarded the sultan of Turkey as their spiritual leader, Khalifa (Caliph).
During the First World War, Turkey had allied with Germany and Austria against the British.
- **Discontented Indian Muslims:** The Indian Muslims supported the government during the First World War with an understanding that the sacred places of Ottoman Empire would be in the hands of Khalifa.
 - However, after the War, the **Ottoman Empire was divided, Turkey was dismembered and the Khalifa was removed from power.**
 - This angered the Muslims who took it as an insult to the Khalifa. The Ali brothers, **Shoukat Ali and Mohammad Ali** started the Khilafat Movement against the British government.
This movement took place between 1919 and 1924.
- **Khilafat Committee:** In early 1919, the **All India Khilafat Committee** was formed under the leadership of the **Ali brothers, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani**, to force the British Government to change its attitude to Turkey.
 - Thus, the grounds for a country-wide agitation was prepared.
 - An **All India Khilafat Conference** was held in Delhi in November 1919 and the call was made to boycott the British goods.
- **Demands of Indian Muslims:** In India, the Muslims demanded from the British that:
 - The Khalifa's control over Muslim sacred places should be retained.
 - The Khalifa should be left with sufficient territories after territorial arrangements.
- **Congress' Initial Stand:** The support of the Congress was essential for the Khilafat movement to succeed.
 - Although **Mahatma Gandhi** was in favour of launching Satyagraha and non-cooperation against the Government on the Khilafat issue, the **Congress was not united on this form of political action.**
 - The Congress, later, felt inclined to provide its support as it was a **golden opportunity to unite the Hindus and Muslims** and to bring Muslim participation in such mass movements.
 - The Muslim League also decided to give full support to the Congress and its agitation on political questions.

The Non-Cooperation Khilafat Movement

- **Role of Mahatma Gandhi:**

- **Beginning of the Gandhian Movements:** The Non-Cooperation Movement was the beginning of the Gandhian Movement against the British.

Mahatma Gandhi returned to India in 1915 and started organising peasants and labourers protests, such as those in **Kheda**, **Champaran** and **Ahmedabad**, against the atrocities that were being inflicted upon them.

- **Beginning of Non-Cooperation:** By the repressive measures of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the denial of justice, Gandhi observed that “the only effective means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of the wrongs in future is the **establishment of Swaraj**”.

- Consequently, the non-co-operation campaign was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi on 1st August, 1919.
- The Movement was **initiated in support of the Khilafat Movement**.

- **During the Movement:**

- **Spread of Non-violence Message:** Millions of the countrymen stopped their work on that day as a mark of their support to Gandhi and as antipathy towards the Government.

Gandhi along with Ali-brothers made extensive tours to **preach the message of national unity and non-cooperation** with the government.

- **Boycott of British Titles and Goods:** The programme of non-cooperation consisted of a **surrender of British titles** and honours, **boycott of British Courts**, Legislatures and educational institutions as well as the **boycott of foreign-made goods**.

People lit public bonfires of foreign cloth. The **imports of foreign cloth fell** drastically between 1920 and 1922.

- **Promotion of Swadeshi:** The boycott led to the promotion of **Swadeshi** goods especially hand-spun and **hand-woven Khadi cloth**, the removal of untouchability, the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and abstention of alcoholic beverage.

Charkha became a household article.

- **People's Response to the Movement:**

- **Students:** Students in thousands left schools and colleges established by the Government and **joined the movement in large numbers.**
- **Middle Class People:** They **initially led the movement** but later showed a lot of reservations about Gandhi's programme.
- **Businessmen:** The economic boycott **received support** from the Indian business group because they had benefited from the nationalists' emphasis on the use of swadeshi.
- **Peasants:** There was a **massive participation by the peasants.** However, it further led to the confrontation between the 'lower and upper castes'.

The movement gave an opportunity to the toiling masses to express their real feelings against the British as well as their Indian masters and oppressors.
- **Women:** Women participated in large numbers, **gave up purdah** and offered their ornaments for the Tilak Fund.
 - They took active part in picketing before the shops selling foreign cloth and liquor.
 - The Tilak Swaraj Fund was announced by Mahatma Gandhi after one year of the beginning of the Non-Cooperation movement.

The Fund was a homage to Bal Gangadhar Tilak on his first death anniversary, aimed at collecting Rs 1 crore to aid India's freedom struggle and resistance to the British rule.
- **Government's Response:** The police resorted to firing which took the lives of a number of people.
 - Congress and Khilafat Volunteer Organizations were declared unlawful and illegal.
 - Public meetings were banned and most of the leaders barring Gandhi were arrested.

- **Important Personalities Involved:**

- Eminent persons like C Rajgopalachari, **Vallabhbhai Patel**, Gopabandhu Das, Ajmal Khan, **Subhash Chandra Bose** and **Jawaharlal Nehru** joined the movement.
- **Motilal Nehru** and **Chitranjan Das** also joined the movement by giving up their legal profession.

- **Withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement:** In February 1922, at **Chauri Chaura**, Uttar Pradesh, twenty two policemen were brutally killed by the violent mob after the conflict between the mob and the policemen of the Thana.
 - The news shocked Gandhi too much. Not happy with the increasingly violent trend of the movement, he **immediately announced the withdrawal of the movement.**
 - Most of the nationalist leaders including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Subhash Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, however, **expressed their disagreement at Gandhi's decision to withdraw the movement.**
 - In March 1922, **Gandhi was arrested** and sentenced to six years in jail.

Causes of Failure of the Movement

- **No Negotiations by Government:** The movement began showing signs of fatigue as it was not possible to sustain any movement at a high pitch for very long.

The Government seemed to be in no mood for negotiations.
- **Loss of Relevance of Khilafat Issue:** The central theme of the agitation, the Khilafat question, dissipated soon.
 - In November 1922, the people of Turkey rose under **Mustafa Kamal Pasha** and **deprived the Sultan of political power.** Turkey was made a secular state.
 - A European style of legal system was established in Turkey and extensive rights were granted to women.
 - Education was nationalised and modern agriculture and industries developed.
 - In 1924, the Khilafat was abolished.
- **Lack of Active Response:** In places like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, which were centres of elite politicians, the response to Gandhi's call was very limited.

The response to the call for resignation from the government service, surrendering of titles, etc., was not taken seriously.
- **No Abstinence from Violence:** People had not learnt or fully understood the method of non-violence.

The Chauri-Chaura incident marred the spirit of the movement leading to the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation movement.

Impact of Non-Cooperation Movement

- **Maximum Extent of the Movement:** With the Non-Cooperation Movement, nationalist sentiments reached every nook and corner of the country and politicised every strata of population: the artisans, peasants, students, urban poor, women, traders etc.
- **Establishment of Swaraj and Swadeshi Institutions:** National institutions like Gujarat Vidyapith, Kashi Vidyapith, Bihar Vidyapitha, the Bengal National University, Jamia Milia Islamia and the National Muslim University were established.

It gave birth to the strongest idea of having Swaraj, the love for the use of Khadi and becoming a Swadeshi.

- **Instilling Unity among Indians:** The country had been united by specific anti feelings, grievances against the British projecting Gandhi as the only unchallenged leader of the century.

The Khilafat issue was not directly linked to Indian politics but it provided the immediate declaration to the movement and added advantage of cementing Hindu-Muslim unity against the British.

- **Impacts on the Economic Front:** Foreign goods were boycotted and the import of foreign cloth halved between 1921 and 1922.

In many places merchants and traders refused to trade in foreign goods or finance foreign trade.

Some Important Events

- The **Treaty of Sevres with Turkey** was signed in May 1920 which completely dismembered Turkey.
- In June 1920, an **all-party conference at Allahabad** approved a programme of boycott of schools, colleges and law courts, and asked Mahatma Gandhi to lead it.
- On August 31, 1920, the **Khilafat Committee started a campaign of non-cooperation** and the movement was formally launched.
- In September 1920, at a special session in Calcutta, the **Congress approved a non-cooperation programme** till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were removed and swaraj was established.
- In December 1920, at the **Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress**; the programme of **non-cooperation was endorsed**.

Some important organisational changes were made: a **Congress Working Committee (CWC) of 15 members was set up** to lead the Congress from now onwards.