

# NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

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# NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

- ▶ During the First World War, the Congress gave demonstration of its loyalty to the British. Even Gandhiji urged the Gujarati peasants to join the army, if they wanted to win Swaraj.
- ▶ But the events of 1919 like the Khilafat wrongs, passing of the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy greatly disillusioned Gandhiji.
- ▶ He turned from a cooperator to a non-cooperator and decided to start the Non-Cooperation Movement.
- ▶ Non-cooperation is '*a way of protesting in which one does not cooperate with the evil-doer.*' Gandhiji asked the people not to assist the foreign government to rule over them.
- ▶ Gandhiji said, "Non-Cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good."

# CAUSES THAT LED TO THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

# 1. Khilafat Movement

- ▶ In the First World War Turkey was defeated and the Ottoman Empire was divided.
- ▶ The Sultan of Turkey, who was the Caliph was deprived of all authority. The Caliph was looked upon by large sections of Muslims as their religious head.
- ▶ They felt that any weakening of the Caliph's position would adversely affect the position of the Muslims.

- ▶ In the First World War, the British fought against Turkey.
- ▶ The Muslim population in India started a powerful agitation known as the *Khilafat Movement*, under the leadership of the Ali Brothers—Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali—Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani.

## The Khilafatists formed a three-point programme

- ▶ (a) the Ottoman Caliph should retain his empire;
- ▶ (b) the Caliph must be left with sufficient territory to enable him to defend the Islamic faith; and
- ▶ (c) the Arab lands (Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Palestine) must remain under the Muslim rule. 'Khilafat Day' was observed on October 17, 1919 on an all-India scale.

- ▶ Gandhiji saw in the Khilafat Movement an opportunity for uniting Hindus and Muslims.
- ▶ He said that the Congress plea for Hindu-Muslim unity *"would be an empty phrase if the Hindus hold aloof from the Muslims when their vital interests are at stake"*.
- ▶ Mahatma Gandhi was elected as President of the All-India Khilafat Conference in November 1919.
- ▶ He advised the Khilafat Committee to adopt a policy of Non-Cooperation with the Government.

- ▶ By August 31, 1920, the Khilafat Non-Cooperation Movement started.
- ▶ People resigned from government services; shops selling foreign goods were picketed; students boycotted schools and colleges; and '*hartals*' and demonstrations were held.
- ▶ By the end of 1920, the Khilafat Movement and the Congress Non-Cooperation Movement merged into one nationwide movement.
- ▶ In 1921, the Khilafat Committee appealed to all the Muslims not to join the police and armed forces and not to pay taxes.
- ▶ This enraged the government. The Ali Brothers were arrested on charges of sedition.



## 2. Rowlatt Act

- ▶ On receiving a report from the Sedition Committee headed by Justice Rowlatt, two Bills were introduced in the Central Legislature in February, 1919.
- ▶ The purpose of the Bills was to 'curb the growing upsurge in the country. In spite of opposition from the Indians, the Rowlatt Act was passed in March, 1919.
- ▶ This Act authorised the Government to imprison any person without trial and convict him in a court.

# The Rowlatt Act implied:

- I. Arrest of a person without warrant.
- II. In camera trial (trial in seclusion).
- III. Restrictions on movements of individuals.
- IV. Suspension of the Right of Habeas Corpus.

- ▶ The Act came like a sudden blow to the Indians who were expecting self-governance. Gandhiji appealed to the Viceroy to withhold his consent to such measures.
- ▶ However his appeal was ignored. He started '*Satyagraha*' as a challenge to the government.

# Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy

- ▶ A large but peaceful crowd gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on April 13, 1919, to protest against the arrest of leaders like Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu and Dr. Satya Pal.
- ▶ Jallianwala Bagh had only one exit, its other three sides were enclosed by buildings. General Dyer, the military Commander of Amritsar surrounded the *Bagh* (garden) with his soldiers.
- ▶ After closing the exit with his troops, he ordered them to shoot at the crowd. The troops kept on firing till their ammunition was exhausted.
- ▶ About one thousand innocent demonstrators were killed and many more wounded. The conscience of the nation was shaken at the massacre of innocent people.

- ▶ In India, the British government made a halfhearted attempt at constitutional reform.
- ▶ But it also made it clear that it had no intention of parting with political power or sharing it with Indians.
- ▶ The British government also refused to annul the Rowlatt Act and make amends for the atrocities in Punjab.

# OBJECTIVES OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

- ▶ At a special session of the Congress held in Kolkata on September 4, 1920 a special resolution was adopted accepting Non-Cooperation Movement as the only option left open for the people of India.
- ▶ The regular session of the Congress at Nagpur in December, 1920 ratified this resolution.

## The Non-Cooperation Movement sought to achieve the following objectives:

- I. To attain self government within the British Empire if possible and outside if necessary.
- II. Annulment of the Rowlatt Act and remedying the 'Punjab wrong', *i.e.*, the British Government should express its regret on the happenings in Punjab, particularly in Amritsar.
- III. Remedying the 'Khilafat wrong', *i.e.*, the British should adopt a lenient attitude towards Turkey, and restore the old status of the Sultan of Turkey.



# PROGRAMMES

- ▶ The movement included the following programmes:

# *Boycott programmes*

- ▶ Boycott of government schools, colleges and courts.
- ▶ Boycott of foreign goods.
- ▶ Boycott of elections to be held for the Councils as suggested by the reforms of 1919.
- ▶ Resignation from nominated seats in local bodies.
- ▶ Surrender of titles and honorary offices.
- ▶ Refusal to attend government functions.

# *Swadeshi programmes*

- ▶ Popularisation of Swadeshi and Khadi by reviving hand-spinning and hand-weaving.
- ▶ Establishment of national schools and colleges and private arbitration courts known as *panchayats* all over India.
- ▶ Development of unity between Hindus and Muslims.
- ▶ Removal of untouchability and other measures for Harijan welfare.
- ▶ Emancipation and upliftment of women.

# ACTIVITIES DURING NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

- ▶ The nation enthusiastically responded to the call of Gandhiji. The people were ready to practise noncooperation with the government in every field.

1. Lawyers such as Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and many others gave up their legal practice.
2. Students left schools and colleges.
3. The Congress boycotted the elections to the legislatures by not putting up candidates for the first elections to the Councils.
4. *Charkhas* were manufactured for the people to spin cloth. Gandhiji himself started spinning.
5. The *Jamia Millia Islamia* was established as a national university. The *Bihar Vidyapith*, *Kashi Vidyapith* and the *Gujarat Vidyapith*, were the other national universities that were established with teachers like Acharya Narendra Dev, Dr. Zakir Hussain and Lala Lajpat Rai.

6. Rabindranath Tagore and many other distinguished citizens of India renounced their titles and awards. Gandhiji returned the medals that were awarded for his work in South Africa.
7. People gave generous contribution to finance the movement.
8. Shops selling foreign goods and liquor were picketed. Foreign cloth was burnt in market places.
9. In Malabar, the Moplas rebelled against the authorities. This rebellion assumed a communal character when they killed many Hindus. This unfortunate incident gave a severe blow to the Hindu-Muslim unity.
10. The Prince of Wales came to India in 1921. The people boycotted his visit at Mumbai, observed a hartal and arranged a meeting on the beach. The mob turned unruly and riots followed. The police opened fire. This turmoil of three days killed 59 people.

# REPRESSION BY THE GOVERNMENT

- ▶ The Government took severe measures to suppress the movement. Under Gandhiji's inspiration, prison lost its terror and became a place of pilgrimage. All important leaders except Gandhiji were arrested and sent to jail.
- ▶ Processions and public meetings were banned. The Khilafat and the Congress volunteer organisations were declared illegal. Unfortunately the whole movement was abruptly called off on February 12, 1922, at Gandhiji's insistence, following the news of the Chauri Chaura incident.

# SUSPENSION OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

- ▶ The tragedy at Chauri Chaura, a village in Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh, occurred on February 5, 1922.
- ▶ A procession of about 3,000 peasants marched to the police station to protest against the police officer who had beaten some volunteers picketing a liquor shop. The police fired at the peasants.
- ▶ This infuriated the demonstrators and they set the nearby police station on fire, killing 22 policemen who were inside the police station. There were a few violent incidents in other parts of the country.
- ▶ Gandhiji, a believer in '*Ahimsa*' was greatly shocked at these incidents and he withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement on February 12, 1922.



- ▶ This action of Gandhiji of suspending the agitation was severely criticised by leaders like Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai. Subhas Chandra Bose called it a national calamity.
- ▶ Gandhiji assured Jawaharlal Nehru, *"If the thing had not been suspended we would have been leading not a non-violent struggle. The cause will prosper by this retreat."*
- ▶ Nevertheless, everybody respected his decision in view of the great personal influence of Gandhiji.

- ▶ Gandhiji suspended the law-breaking part of the movement and asked Congressmen to pay attention to the constructive programmes, *i.e.*, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity and the popularisation of Swadeshi and khadi.
- ▶ Gandhiji was arrested for propagating sedition on March 10, 1922. He was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Gandhiji was released after two years because of his ill health.

# **IMPACT OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT**

# IMPACT OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

- ▶ The movement failed to achieve any of its three main demands, namely :
  - ▶ (i) obtaining Swaraj;
  - ▶ (ii) obtaining an apology for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and
  - ▶ (iii) solving the Khilafat problem. Gandhiji's promise to achieve Swaraj within one year of launching the movement was not fulfilled. But its ultimate gain outweighed the immediate losses.
- ▶ It was a great step forward in the course of the Indian national movement in the following ways:

# I. The National Movement Became a Mass Movement

- ▶ The Indian national movement, for the first time in history, acquired a real *mass base* with the participation of different sections of Indian society such as peasants, workers, students, teachers and women.
- ▶ However, the big industrialists, capitalists and zamindars still remained hostile. Jawaharlal Nehru described Non-Cooperation as '*a peaceful rebellion, a most civilized form of warfare, and yet dangerous to the stability of the State*' (British rule).

## 2. Instilled Confidence Among the People

- ▶ It generated a desire for freedom and inspired people to challenge the colonial rule.
- ▶ Renowned historian Bipin Chandra has rightly said, *"Out of the experience of this attempt to defy openly the foreign rulers and the Government they had set up, was born a new sense of self-confidence and self-esteem."*

### 3. The Congress Became a Revolutionary Movement:

- It transformed the Indian National Congress from a deliberative assembly into an organisation *for action*. It became the organiser and leader of the masses in their national struggle. Thus, the Congress became a force to reckon with.

## 4. Fostered Hindu-Muslim Unity

- ▶ It fostered *Hindu-Muslim unity* which could be seen in the merger of the Khilafat issue with this Movement.
- ▶ It provided an opportunity to the Congress to bring the urban Muslims into the National Movement by convincing them that the nation was equally concerned with the problems affecting them.



## 5. Promoted Social Reforms

- ▶ As a consequence of the Non-Cooperation Movement several steps were taken in the direction of *prohibition* and removal of *untouchability*.
- ▶ Many *national schools* and colleges were set up in different parts of the country.
- ▶ The boycott of the foreign goods led to *the promotion of Indian handicrafts and industries*. `Khadi became the symbol of the National Movement.

## 6. Spread Nationalism to Every Part of the Country

- ▶ The Movement gave a new boost to nationalism in India. At its annual session at Nagpur in December 1920, changes were made in the Constitution of the Congress. Provincial Congress Committees were reorganised on the basis of linguistic areas.
- ▶ The Congress was now to be led by a Working Committee of 15 members, including the President and the secretaries.
- ▶ This would enable the Congress to function as a continuous political organisation and would provide it with the machinery for implementing resolutions.
- ▶ The Congress organisation was able *to reach down to villages*. Its membership fee was reduced to four *annas* (25 paise of today) per year to enable the rural and urban poor to become its members.

## 7. Popularised the Cult of Swaraj

- ▶ The goal of the Non-Cooperation Movement was to attain *Swaraj* within the British empire, if possible, and outside, if necessary.
- ▶ The Congress realised the nature and value of the popular support and though the movement failed immediately to attain *Swaraj*, it definitely came nearer to it.

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Thank you