

Mahatma Gandhi and the Non-Cooperation Movement



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“Non-Cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good.”- Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract

In the history of nationalism, a single individual is often identified with the making of a nation. Thus, for example, we associate Garibaldi with the making of Italy, George Washington with the American War of Independence, and Ho Chi Minh with the struggle to free Vietnam from colonial rule. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi has been regarded as the ‘Father’ of the Indian nation. In so far as Gandhiji was the most influential and revered of all the leaders who participated in the freedom struggle, that characterization is not misplaced. However, like Washington or Ho Chi-Minh, Mahatma Gandhi’s political career was shaped and constrained by the society in which he lived. Judith Brown has described nationalist movements in India before the arrival of Gandhiji from South Africa as “politics of studied limitations” and by Ravindra Kumar as a “movement representing the classes” as opposed to the masses. Gandhiji is considered one of the most iconic figures in the world. With his unique yet powerful political tools of Satyagraha and nonviolence, he inspired several other political leaders worldwide, including Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Gandhi, apart from helping India triumph in its fight for Independence. According to Bipan Chandra, “Gandhian nonviolence was not only a matter of principle but was a long-term strategy that helped gain India’s Independence. “This research paper analyses Gandhiji’s role as an eminent leader in the Non-Cooperation movement.

Keywords: Gandhi, untouchable, Independence, Political, India, nonviolence

Introduction

Gandhiji was born in the princely state of Porbandar Gujarat. He was born into a Hindu merchant caste family. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, was a diwan of Porbandar, and his mother, Putlibai, was pious and belonged to an affluent Pranami Vaishnava family. Gandhi was deeply influenced by his mother, an extremely pious lady who "would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers... she would take the most rigid vows and keep them without flinching. In his early years, Gandhi was deeply influenced by the stories of Shrivana and Harishchandra, which reflected the importance of truth. Through these stories and personal experiences, he realized that truth and love are among the supreme values. Mohandas married Kasturba Makhanji at the age of 13. He went to South Africa during his studies, where he observed white racism against the Indian workers. He organized the Indian workers to enable them to fight for their rights. He stayed there till 1915 and returned to India. In South Africa, the United Indians belong to different religions and classes. Gandhiji evolved the technique of Satyagraha during his stay in South Africa, which was based entirely on truth and nonviolence.

Education

Gandhiji’s education was met with challenges from elementary school up to the university level. Despite these challenges, he accomplished his goals and inspired his relatives. When his family moved to Rajkot because of his transfer, a nine-year-old Gandhi was enrolled at a local school where he studied arithmetic, history, geography, and languages. He was not very good at academics or in any sports activities. When he was 11 years old, he attended a high school named Alfred High School in Rajkot. There was much improvement in his performance in high school. For higher studies, He enrolled in Samaldas Arts College in Bhavnagar State. After some time, Gandhi decided to go back to college. He decided to change in his academic course and went to London for his further studies in Law. He joined the University College, London, and completed his Law degree successfully after 03 years. He came back to India after being called to the bar by Inner Temple. With Gandhiji’s education from primary to college, he managed to have a successful career despite the challenges he faced. “My religion is based on truth and nonviolence. Truth is my God. Nonviolence is the means of realizing Him”- Mahatma Gandhi.

Launching of the Movement

The Non-Cooperation movement was the first of the three most important movements of India's struggle for Independence which was launched as a protest against the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre, and the Khilafat movement. The movement was launched formally on 1st August 1920 by the Indian Nation Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The INC introduced the movement's program in its Calcutta session of 1920, which was presided by Lala Lajpat Rai. Mahatma Gandhi was the main force behind the movement. In March 1920, he issued a manifesto declaring a doctrine of the non-violent, non-cooperation movement. Gandhiji urged Congress to launch a Non-Cooperation Movement against the British government.

Programs of the Movement

After the movement's announcement, Gandhi traveled to many parts of the country to explain the movement's ideology and programs. He organized the rallies and tried to understand the people about the intention toward the British government. The programs of the movement are followed as-

- Withdrawing of students from the courts, schools, and colleges.
- Boycott foreign goods and adopt Swadeshi.
- Surrender of all British titles.
- Boycott elections and other government functions, do away with untouchability, and promote communal harmony.
- Non-payment of taxes to the government.
- Resignation from government nominated seats in local bodies.

Violence at Chauri-Chaura and Withdrawal of the Movement

When the movement was in its flow, a horrible incident came into existence on 5th February 1922 at Chauri-Chaura in Gorakhpur; a peaceful mob turned violent and clashed with the police officials, which resulted in the deaths of several police officers. On 10th February 1922, Gandhiji was arrested and tried at Ahmedabad. A simple prison of 6 years was awarded to him, So Gandhiji felt that the movement was turning violent. Then congress working committee passed a resolution on 12th February 1922, on the advice of Gandhiji from Bardauli the withdraw the movement. Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, N.C. Kelkar and many other leaders

opposed the decision of Gandhiji, and they founded the Swaraj Party.

Causes of the Origin of the Movement

In his famous book Hind Swaraj, Gandhiji declared that British rule was established in India with the cooperation of Indians and had survived only because of this cooperation. If Indians refused to cooperate, British rule in India would collapse within a year, and Swaraj would come. Therefore, he started the Non-Cooperation Movement. These are the reasons for the origin of the movement-

Rowlett Act- The Rowlatt Act was related to the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre. It had a profound role on the Indian people and leaders. Their faith in the British justice system was broken, and the whole country was against the British administration.

The Khilafat Movement - During the 1st world war, Turkey fought against the British. After Turkey's defeat, the Ottoman caliphate was proposed to be dissolved. Muslims regarded the Sultan of Turkey as their caliph. The movement was launched in the leadership of the Ali Brothers, Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan, and Hasrat Mohani. It got support from Mahatma Gandhi to persuade the British government not to abolish the caliphate. The leaders of the non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji led a joint protest against the British.

Home Rule Movement- The home rule movement started by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak set the stage for the non-cooperation movement. The extremists and the moderates of the INC were united, and the Lucknow Pact also saw solidarity between the Muslim League and the Congress Party. This pact also played an essential role in the origin of the non-cooperation movement.

Economic Hardship Due to World War-1st - When India participated in the war caused a lot of economic hardships for the people. Prices of goods began to soar, which affected the people. Peasants were also facing a financial crisis due to the high rates of goods. All these issues led to resentment against the government.

People's Response to the Non-Cooperation Movement

Business Class - The business class supported the movement, benefiting from the economic boycott of British goods. However, many of the business class did not support the movement.

Peasants - Peasants favored Gandhiji because they were against the exploitation by landlords and traders. Baba Ramchandra and Jawahar Lal Nehru organized the Oudh Kisan Sabha in October 1920 for the welfare of the peasant class. They tried to bring Awadh's peasant struggle into Non-Cooperation Movement.

Tribals - In tribal areas, the peasants here followed the idea of Gandhiji in another way. In their areas, large forest areas were occupied by colonial rule. When peasants were forced to pay the Bega, they revolted against the rule. Alluri Sitaram Raju led the revolt there and said that he was inspired by the movement and requested the people to wear Khadi as a disciple of Gandhiji.

Women - The participation of women in the public domain started during Non-Cooperation Movement when Gandhiji mobilized a large number of women. Sarojini Naidu was one of the famous nationalists during the period. She joined the movement in 1921 and visited the riot-torn areas. She appealed to women to agitate against the Rowlett Act. Basanti Devi, Urmila Devi, and Suniti Devi were well-known women organizers during the movement.

Students - They became the most active members of the movement. They left schools and colleges and joined the nationalist movement. Most of the students were from the Jamia Milia Islamia and the Kashi Vidyapeeth.

Reasons for failure of the Movement

There were some reasons for the unsuccessful attempt for Indian Independence -

- In the beginning, people from the middle classes joined the movement, but they left the program after some time.
- In some famous areas of Indian politics, such as Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, the role of Gandhiji was very limited.
- A section of the business class did not support the movement. They seemed to be afraid of labor unrest in the factories.
- People had not fully understood the method of nonviolence. A violent incident happened in Chauri-Chaura when Gandhiji withdrew Non-

Cooperation Movement and explained the learned practice of nonviolence.

Conclusion

Even though the Non-Cooperation movement did not achieve its significant aims, Gandhiji played an essential role in the freedom struggle of India, which gave new confidence to the ordinary people with new dimensions. These mill owners made money during this time. Through this movement, Gandhiji emerged as a populist leader in the Indian context. Peasant and tribal's movements became a part of the Indian National Movement. It was a non-violent movement according to the ideology of Gandhiji. The most valuable achievement of this movement was that it gave confidence to the ordinary people and taught them lessons of nonviolence, nationalization, integrity, and communal harmony. *The* movement was the unanimous unification of the entire nation. The revolt provided massive encouragement to millions of Indian nationalists. With the efforts of Gandhiji, millions of nationalists came together and faced the challenges of the British government. In this movement, it is observed that the participation of Hindus and Muslims on a large scale showed the country's harmony. Through the ideology of Gandhiji, people became aware of their political rights.

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