

NON COOPERATION MOVEMENT

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, was part of many Indian revolutions that led to the day of independence. One of the significant movements & first attempts on a large scale for the independence of India was the Non-Cooperation movement. Many freedom fighters of India were associated with the moment. It was a peaceful and non-violent movement but later turned into violent acts.

The non-cooperation movement was launched in 1920 on 4th September. It was led by Mahatma Gandhi & focused on abolishing the use of British products, declining or resigning from British posts, educational institutions, prohibiting government regulations, courts, etc. The movement was non-violent & launched to withdraw the nation's cooperation after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre & Rowlatt Act. Mahatma Gandhi stated India could achieve independence within a year if this movement was a success. It was the transition of individuals to a mass movement. Non-cooperation was focused to get full independence also known as Purna Swaraj.

THE IDEAS EXPRESSED BY GANDHIJI IN HIS BOOK

- 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 refused to cooperate, British rule in India would collapse within a year, and Swaraj would come. Therefore, he started the Non -Cooperation Movement.

FEATURES OF NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

The non-cooperation movement was based on two aspects majorly, struggle & rules of conduct.

- Renunciation from their titles and notable posts
- Non- cooperation movement pushed the use & manufacturing of goods & products made in India were encouraged more & interdict the use of British products.
- The most essential feature of the non-cooperation movement was to follow non-violent & peaceful to fight against the British rules.
- Indians were asked to refuse to take part in elections for the legislative council.
- Prohibiting & withdrawing British education institutions

CAUSES OF NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

The Non - Cooperation Movement has had four main causes:

1. Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and Resultant Punjab Disturbances
2. Dissatisfaction with Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
3. Rowlatt Act

4. Khilafat Agitation

1. Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and Resultant Punjab Disturbances

On April 13, 1919, a large but unarmed crowd gathered at Amritsar in the Jallianwala Bagh to protest the arrest of their popular leaders, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. However, this unarmed crowd of women and children, among others, was fired mercilessly with rifles and machine guns on General Dyer's orders. Thousands of people have been killed and injured. Martial law was proclaimed throughout Punjab after this massacre and the people were subjected to the most uncivilized atrocities.

In order to investigate the Jallianwala Bagh incident and the role of General Dyer, the British government set up the Inquiry Disorders Committee, popularly known as the Hunter Committee after its chairman Lord William Hunter. While the Hunter Committee held General Dyer responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, it upheld his reasons for ordering the firing on the unarmed crowd as well as for imposing martial law in Punjab.

The people of India, due to their clear biases, did not accept the recommendations of the Hunter Committee. There has been unrest among the masses to ensure justice for the wrongs of Punjab has been delivered. In protest, Mahatma Gandhi gave up the Kaiser - I - Hind title granted to him by the British government.

2. Unhappiness with the reforms in Montagu – Chelmsford

The 1919 Government of India Act was enacted based on the 1918 Montagu - Chelmsford proposals recommendations. This Act introduced the ' Dyarchy ' system and divided topics into lists – Reserved and Transferred. The Legislative Assembly (lower house) was introduced with direct elections, but the right to vote was severely curtailed. In addition, there was no control over the Governor General and his Executive Council by the Legislative Assembly.

Indian nationalists, however, had gone far beyond such stopping concessions. The Indian National Congress met under Hasan Imam's presidency at a special session in Bombay in August 1918 and condemned the reforms of Montagu - Chelmsford and instead called for effective self - government.

3. Rowlatt Act

The government enacted the 1919 Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, popularly called the Rowlatt Act, based on the findings of the Rowlatt Committee. This act allowed the government to imprison any person suspected of terrorism for a maximum period of two years without trial. The government passed Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and Rowlatt Act in succession, which were part of the British ' Carrot and Stick policy. This action gave the movement a new direction. At all levels of India, Gandhi organized a mass protest.

4. Khilafat Movement

The Khilafat Movement, which began in 1919, brought the Muslims and the Hindus on a common platform against the British rule, was the most important cause of the Non - Cooperation Movement.

Khilafat Movement in India

Turkey had aligned itself in the First World War with Germany - led Axis powers that were defeated by Great Britain - led Allied powers. The political - conscious Muslims were critical of British and their allies treatment of the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire that had divided it and properly removed Thrace from Turkey.

The Muslims also regarded the Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph or the religious head of the Muslims and they strongly felt that his position over the Muslim religious places should not be undermined.

Under the leadership of the Ali Brothers (Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali), Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani, and countrywide Khilafat agitation, a Khilafat Committee was soon formed. The All - India Khilafat Conference held in November 1919 in Delhi decided to withdraw all government cooperation if the government did not meet its demands.

Mahatma Gandhi saw the Khilafat agitation as "an opportunity not to unite Hindus and Muslims in a hundred years time." Also, the Muslims League gave full support to the National Congress and its political agitation.

In early 1920, Gandhi declared that the Khilafat question overshadowed the constitutional reforms and the Jallianwala massacre and announced that he would lead a non - cooperation movement if the terms of peace with Turkey did not satisfy the Indian Muslims.

LEADERS OF THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

The Ali Brothers (Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali), Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan, and Hasrat Mohani were the leaders of the Khilafat Movement. Mahatma Gandhi later also became one of the leaders of the Khilafat Movement in India by strongly advocating the Khilafat cause.

THE LAUNCH OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

The above mentioned causes resulted in unrest among the masses anxious to take political action against the British government. Only added fuel to the fire was the economic hardship suffered by ordinary Indians. On August 1, 1920, the Non - Cooperation Movement was officially launched.

Congress Nagpur session in December 1920 defined the Non - Cooperation program clearly in detail. Following changes to the Indian National Congress Constitution at the December 1920 Nagpur Session:

1. The Congress goal has been shifted from achieving self - government through constitutional and legal means to achieving Swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means.
2. The Congress now had to have a 15-member Working Committee to look after its daily affairs.
3. Linguistically, Provincial Congress Committees were to be organized now.
4. The membership fee was reduced to 4 years per year to make it possible for the poor to join.
5. Congress was to use Hindi as far as possible.

THE NON - COOPERATION MOVEMENT METHOD AND SPREAD

- Together with the Ali brothers, Mahatma Gandhi undertook a nationwide tour of numerous student and political worker rallies and meetings. This led to thousands of students leaving schools and colleges to join over 800 national schools and colleges throughout the country.
- The educational boycott in Bengal was especially successful. C.R Das played an important role in promoting the movement and Subhash Bose became the head of the Calcutta National Congress. The educational boycott was also very successful in Punjab, and Lala Lajpat Rai played the leading role here.
- The other successful boycott observed was lawyers such as C.R Das, Motilal Nehru, M.R Jaykar, Saifuddin Kitchlew and others boycotting the law courts.
- However, the Non - Cooperation Movement's most successful item was the foreign cloth boycott. A major form of the boycott was also the picketing of shops selling foreign cloth. Liquor shops were also picketing.
- Gandhi and Congress put a lot of stress on handspun Khadi in support of domestic textiles. Charkhas were widely popularized and khadi became the national movement's uniform.
- In July 1921, at the All India Khilafat Conference in Karachi, Mohammed Ali declared that continuing in the British Army was ' religiously unlawful for the Muslims. Gandhi repeated Mohammed Ali's exhortation, adding that every civilian and army member should sever links with the repressive British government.
- A movement against Union board taxes has been launched in Midnapore district of Bengal. No - tax movements were also organized in the Andhra district of Guntur in Chirala - Pirala and Pedanandipadu taluka.
- In U.P, where a powerful Kisan Sabha movement was underway, Jawaharlal Nehru led the non - cooperation movement among others.
- The Non - Cooperation and Khilafat propaganda in the Malabar region of Kerala helped to arouse Muslim tenants, called the Moplahs, against their renters, but the movement sometimes took on a common color.
- In Assam, tea plantation laborers went on strike. While Andhra became popular with defiance of forest laws.
- The Akali movement took place in Punjab as part of the Non - Cooperation Movement to wrest control of the gurudwaras from the corrupt mahants (priests)

END OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

While in 1921 the Non - Cooperation Movement was in full steam, the masses were awakened from their slumber and the grass root workers of Congress, as well as the leadership, were asking Mahatma Gandhi to launch the next phase of mass civil disobedience.

Gandhi announced that massive civil disobedience would begin in the Bardoli Taluka district of Surat and that all other parts of the country should cooperate by maintaining total discipline and silence in order to concentrate the entire attention of the movement on Bardoli.

However, the Chauri Chaura incident occurred before mass civil disobedience could be launched.

CHAURI CHAURA INCIDENT

A Congress - Khilafat procession took place at Chauri Chaura in U.P. district of Gorakhpur on February 5, 1922. Irritated by some policemen's behavior, they were attacked by a crowd section.

The police opened fire on the unarmed procession in retaliation. Instigated by this, the whole procession attacked the police and the mob set fire to the building when the police hid inside the police station. The cops who were trying to escape were hacked into pieces and thrown into the fire. In the Chauri Chaura incident, 22 police officers were killed.

Gandhi was profoundly disturbed by the Chauri Chaura incident news. Gandhi decided to withdraw the movement because it violated the strict condition of non - violence that he had set for the launch of the civil disobedience phase and the continuation of the non - cooperation movement. Thus, the Non - Cooperation Movement came to an end on February 12, 1922.

IMPACT OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

Despite the failure of the Non - Cooperation Movement to achieve its primary goal of Swaraj, it has succeeded on many other counts highlighted below:

1. The National Congress has shown that it represents the country's majority opinion. It can not be charged with representing a 'microscopic minority' anymore.'
2. The movement's geographical spread was also nationwide. While some areas were more active than others, few areas, if any, remained entirely passive to the call for non – cooperation.
3. The Non - Cooperation Movement was the masses ' first opportunity to participate in politics and combat injustice and economic hardship caused by years of foreign rule.
4. Notwithstanding the incidents of Malabar, which were not seen later during the Civil Disobedience Movement, there was considerable involvement of Muslims in the movement and the maintenance of communal harmony.