



**M. A.(HISTORY) PART-II  
(SEMESTER-III)**

**PAPER IV**

**(CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL  
MOVEMENT IN INDIA 1858-1930)**

**UNIT NO. 2**

**SECTION-A**

**Centre for Distance and Online Education  
Punjabi University, Patiala**  
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**LESSON NOS.**

- 2.1: Revolutionaries in India and Abroad : The Ghadar Movement
- 2.2: The Home Rule Leagues.
- 2.3: The Lucknow Pact
- 2.4: Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy and its impact on Struggle for freedom.
- 2.5: Gandhi's assumption of Leadership of National Movement and Khilafat Movement.
- 2.6: Gandhi and Non-Cooperation Movement.
- 2.7: Formation of the Swarajist Party and its Impact on Indian Politics.
- 2.8: New Ferment in National Politics: Simon Commission.
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**LESSON NO. 2.1**

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**Revolutionaries in India and AbroadThe Ghadar Movement****Structure of the lesson**

- 2.1.1 Objectives
- 2.1.2 Introduction
- 2.1.3 Circumstances
- 2.1.4. Har Dayal the Formation of the Ghadar Party
- 2.1.5. Principles and Programme
- 2.1.6. Indian Independence Committee in Berlin
- 2.1.7. The plot of action in India
- 2.1.8 Assessment and the Causes of its Failure
- 2.1.9 Summary

**2.1.1. Objectives:**

- To study the circumstances responsible to carry on freedom struggle from abroad.
- To examine the formation and activities of Ghadar party.
- To evaluate the causes of its failure.

**2.1.2. Introduction**

The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of national consciousness in India. This consciousness found organisational shape in a number of political associations that came up in different parts of the country. The Indian National Congress established in 1885, as an organisation which played a dominant role in the Indian national movement. For the first twenty years the Congress politics was almost exclusively moderate and constitutional. Meanwhile feelings of discontentment and even disillusionment were growing with the politics of prayers, petitions and protests. It was increasingly realised that this politics was altogether futile and ineffectual. There were other circumstances also that contributed 'to heighten this feeling and generate extremist tendencies in Indian Politics. The extremism found outlet in two

forms: one, within the Indian National Congress which remained wedded to the principle or policy of eschewing violence and two, outside the Congress in number of revolutionary movements, also described as terrorist movement. The Ghadar movement holds an eminent position in the history of the Indian struggle for freedom and belongs to the category of revolutionary movements’.

### **2.1.3. Circumstances**

The feeling of nationalism was not only confined to Indians living in India. It was also beginning to influence the emigrants who had left the motherland and settled in other countries in search of better material prospects. In the development of this feeling an important contributory factor was the discriminatory treatment to which these expatriate Indians were often exposed. Apart from humiliation such discrimination also means relative material deprivation. When these expatriate Indians failed in the efforts to obtain justice from the government of the country where they had settled, the realisation eventually dawned upon them that they were being subject to injustice and humiliation because they belong to a subject country whose government was not interested in safeguarding their interests.

This was precisely the background against which the Ghadar movement took birth in America. Driven out of the country by their inability to take out a bare living many peasants and farmers from Punjab migrated, to place, like Canada and U.S.A. The news of their success encouraged further migration. By 1910, the number of Indians working on farms and factories both in Canada and the USA has reached 30,000. There were also some who earned substantial profit from trade business, but a class of Indians were looked down upon. Everywhere they were insulted and despised. In hotels and trains, parks and theatres, they were discriminated against. I Everywhere notice boards were found and it was written on them: “Hindus and Dogs Not Allowed”. Apart from the general atmosphere of racial arrogance were hung with a caption of organized American workers hatred for the cheap Indian labourers, especially due to the reason that they allowed themselves to be used by the American capitalists to fail the strikes of the American workers. General xenophobia, produced by disparities of culture was another cause of anxiety for them. But what alarmed the Indian expatriates the most, was the Asiatic Exclusion Act.

It was natural in these circumstances that even these ill-educated or uneducated Indians should develop some political consciousness. In fact, this development was facilitated by the activities of some educated Indians in America -mostly students who carried on nationalist propaganda there. One of them was Taraknath Dass. He and his group published the Free Hindustan as early as 1908. A number of political organisation also came up although they often proved to be short lived and were invariably localised in terms of their

membership and activities. The Sikh immigrants to seek redress of their grievances through their Khalsa Diwan Society and the network of Gurdwaras. But like in India, prayers and petitions seemed proved in fructuous in U.S.A also.

#### **2.1.4. Lala Har Dayal and the Formation of the Ghadar Party**

The Indian expatriates consequently were psychologically prepared to listen to a more racial counsel: they soon got an extraordinary man who offered such counsel. This man was Har Dayal intensely patriotic and a powerful writer. Har Dayal was seriously thinking in terms of a violent revolution to throw the British out of India. Har Dayal was determined to use his stay in the U.S.A. for preparing ground for expulsion of the British from India.

Har Dayal realised that he had two advantages in the U.S.A. Firstly, he could carry on propaganda for planning a revolutionary movement with much greater freedom in America than in India, Secondly, the Indian expatriates promised to provide him a basis of support among the masses.

Early in 1910, Har Dayal plunged into the work of propaganda. He wrote an inspiring note to the person who had thrown a bomb on the Viceroy Lord Hardinge in Delhi on 23rd December, 1912. To quote Har Dayal: "He come like a blessing to oft-repeated sighs and yearnings. He awakended us form sleep he flashed a dazzling light before our dipping eyelids. He who threw the bomb showed that the race of man has not died out in India.

To carry on his propaganda regularly and effectively, Har Dayal started a weekly paper in 1913, namely Ghadar (rebellion.) The term Ghadar was intended to commemorate the struggle of 1857 and to inspire the people. The Ghadar was brought out in Urdu, English, Gurmukhi and Marathi a clear indication of the importance attached by Har Dayal to propaganda work. On the top of the front page, in the mast-head, the Ghadar was described as the "Enemy of the English Race." The paper was distributed free. Har Dayal requested his readers to co-operate in its circulation by passing the copies on to friends and relatives in India after they had themselves read the paper or if they could not read after they had got some one to read it out to them. The Ghadar plainly wrote: "The time is soon to come when rifle and blood will be used for pen and ink."

This is how the Ghadar was seen by the British. It played on every conceivable passion which it could excite, preaching murder and mutiny in every sentence and urging all Indians to go to India with the object of committing murder, causing revolution and expelling the British Government by all means. It circulated with deadly effect among the Sikh immigrants.'

The following advertisement that appeared in the Ghadar will give an idea of how psychologically effective means were employed to work up patriotic

sentiments.

### **WANTED**

Fearless courageous soldiers for spreading mutiny in India.

Salary : Death

Reward : Martyrdom and Freedom

Place : The Field of India

Har Dayal was also conscious of the need for an effective wide-based organisation. The first step in this direction was taken in May, 1913 when the Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast was founded. Unlike earlier localised Association, the Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast was a widespread organisation with unlimited membership. It was intended to provide a mailing list for the despatch of revolutionary propaganda literature. It was also to raise funds.

On 1st November, 1913 was formed the Ghadar Party Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna was unanimously elected its President while Har Dayal was elected its Secretary and editor of the Ghadar. Within the Party was formed a more exclusive group which began to function from 436, Hill Street, San Francisco, named the 'Yugantar Ashram' after the Bengali weekly. 'Yugantar' a proscribed weekly in Government of India. Har Dayal used this name to "show the English that paper which had been published in India by that name was alive to them Ashram was described as a "a fort where bombardment of English rule will be done". To formulate plan of action a Central Committee was constituted. It comprised of two elected representative from the state Committees of Astoria, Marysville, Sacramento, Stockton Fressa, Bakersfied, Los Angles and Imperial Valley.

### **2.1.5. Principles and Programme**

The chief aim of the party as its very name suggested was to liberate Indian from the British through armed revolution the Ghadar Party however was not only negative in the formulation of its aims, it also envisaged the kind of free India that freedom from the British would lead to. This was to be founded on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and was to secure the greatest good of the greatest number. It was also to ensure minimum necessities of life to all its citizens.

But the Ghadar Party did not have a clear formulated plan of action. All that Har Dayal could spell out at that time did not add up to much that was positive and definite. He wrote: "First we have to make a party, this party will comprise of those ready for mutiny. They will print newspapers and write books, and will arrange to give lectures." People in India be added, would send their sons to military schools and some of them would be sent to schools of other nations to learn how to govern. He hoped that with such preparations,

“the mutiny will not be long delayed.” Naturally, with such a nebulous and indeterminate planning, it was impossible to tell when the Ghadar would break out. All that could be done was to expect “to make preparations for this rising.”

One thing however, was almost clearly seen before the First World War broke out, that Indians would have to obtain foreign assistance in order to throw off the British yoke. In specific term, appreciation of the current international situation, suggested that the Germany was the country that could best be relied upon this purpose. In fact at a meeting of the ‘Hind-Association of the Pacific Coast.’ held on 31 st December, 1913, the German Cousul in San Francisco was a special guest. He sat on the dais along with Har Dayal and other leaders of the Association of British intelligence report of the meeting can be trusted. Har Dayal said at this meeting that “Germany was preparing to go to war with England, and that it was the time to get ready to go to India for the coming revolution.’

Another matter in regard to which the position of the Ghadar Party was clear, was about the urgent need for Hindu-Muslim unity. As a matter of fact, Ghadar Party was quite secular in its outlook and programmes as well as in its membership. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims vied with one another in working for the proposed revolution. According to Harish Puri, after the failure of the Ghadar movement in India none of the ex-Ghadrites joined any of the communal organisations of later period.

While Har Dayal was unable to offer a phased programme for the coming revolution he was generously using his written and oral eloquence to stir people. The result was that the very people who had been attracted to politics by narrow material grievances and racial humiliation were now willing to rise above the Asiatic Exclusion Act and work actively for the revolution. This situation, in fact, was getting out of Har Dayal’s control.

Meanwhile, thanks to the assistance of the German agents, Ghadar literature was finding its way almost throughout the British Empire, Soon Ghadar workers started operating in Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Burma, the Dutch East Indies, Mexico, Panama and Brazil.

While great hopes were being pinned on German help, Chinese nationalists under Dr. Sun-yat Sen offered assistance to the Indian struggle. This led to the formulation of a more concrete plan of action. As a first step, it was decided to cut communication by mobbing railway stations and cutting telegraph lines, then destroying the police chowkis, disorganising the military campus and check-posts etc. When this movement gathered momentum, the next step was to establish revolutionary camps in jungles and border areas, in the hills and valleys, and then to start harassing the English administration

and the armies. It was also divided that question of arms and ammunition was to be solved by reading English Military camps and armouries. "It was not possible for us to purchase and procure arms and weapons by any other means except by guerilla raids on army bases of England. In pursuance of this plan the men and "leaders" began to move to achieve their targets.

Attempts were also made to subvert the loyalty of the Indian troops, Sikh, veterans on the west Coast were asked to send Ghadar literature to their old camp mates. They were also asked to return to order to spread revolutionary ideas among all the soldiers.

At this stage, a dramatic development took place. Har Dayal was served with arrest warrants on 25th March, 1914 and was released on bail but before the case could be decided he left U.S.A and went to Geneva. While going to Geneva, he was accompanied by Barkatullah and from there he went to Germany, where he helped Champakaraman Pillai, president of the International pro-India Committee in Zurich, to establish the Indian National Party, which was to collaborate with the German Government during the war. There he began to edit the paper 'Bande Matram' Ram Chand who, after some time began to look after the Ghadar party in America, was accused of deflection and selfishness Dissensions soon followed which were only brought to an end when Ram Chander and many other. Ghadarites were arrested and tried after the U.S.A had joined the first great war. Ram Chand was assassinated by a fellow accused.

### **2.1.6. Indian Independence Committee in Berlin**

Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War the Indian Independence Committee was formed with a view of utilising the German aid for liberating India. This was made possible by the presence in Germany of a number of Indian revolutionaries like Birendra Nath Chattopadhyaya, Taraknath Dass, Champak Romah Pillai, Chandra. H. Chakravarty, and Brakatullah. It was agreed that the Indian would take a loan from the German Government to be repaid after India's independence is achieved. The German Government further agreed to supply arms and send orders to all their consulates abroad to help Indian revolutionaries in that efforts, and to persuade the Sultan of Turkey to declare a Jihad against Britain.

The Indian revolutionaries were not in touch with the Ghadar Party. Chandra K. Chakravarty was sent to the U.S.A, in order to restore amity and harmony in the Ghadar Party which, as we have seen, had been plagued by dissensions following the assumption of leadership by Ram Chandra, but Chakravarty failed in his mission.

The Ghadar movement took deep roots among the Sikhs and other Indians in British Columbia and Canada. The Canadian Govt. to put a stop on the immigration; passed vexatious laws to stop all types of immigration and all

types of means to drive away those who had already been admitted in Canada. In 1913, a Canada based delegation came to India to discuss the immigration laws, but this did not bring any result and many of the Indians had to come back from Canada.

Early in 1914, Gurdit Singh a prosperous contractor who was carrying on his business at Singapore and in Malaya, made a bold bid to circumvent the immigration laws. He chartered a Japanese steamer 'Komagata Maru' and transported 377 Indian passengers mainly Sikhs and Muslims to Vancouver. The Ship reached here on May 23, 1914, but the Canadian Govt. forbade their landing. It was forcibly sent out of the harbour on 13th July. But before it could complete its return journey the First World War started and they came back to Calcutta. They were moored at Budge Budge. In the meantime the Govt. of India passed the "Ingress into India Ordinance act." It authorised the Indian Govt. to restrict the liberty of any person entering India. This act was applied on these passengers. The Govt. had kept a special train to move them to Punjab. About 300 passengers refused to board the train. They tried to march to Calcutta. The firing took place and 18 persons got killed. Many were arrested. Those who returned to Punjab were in rebellious mood and were subjected to humiliating treatment. All emigrants joined together for revolutionary agitation among the people. Their activities included armed dacoities, killing of police officials and distributing revolutionary propaganda among the army people in Punjab.

The Ghadar party however was neither dead nor inactive as a result of these dissensions. Its proposal that ex-patriate Indians should go back to India met with a favourable response. In spite of the fact that the British Indian Government had been warned of this exodus back to motherland, between three and five thousand Ghadarities managed to reach India in different groups and at different times. This number does not include about 400 Ghadarities who were jailed in India and another 2,500 whose movement were restricted by the Government to their own villages. The later included Sohan Singh Bhakna, the President, Kehar Singh and Jawahar Singh, the Vice-Presidents of the Ghadar Party. These brave people managed to reach and work in their country inspite of the Komagata Maru incident which had made the Indian Government particularly suspicious of the Ghadar-party.

#### **2.1.7. The plot of action in India**

The plan behind this exodus into India was to prepare for countrywide uprising. The uprising was to take place after German arms had reached India. Meanwhile, in pursuance of the plan outlined by Bal Shastri Hardas, about twenty dacoities were committed in order to raise funds. Anti-British propaganda was carried on particularly among the soldiers.

The 21st February, 1915, was fixed as the day of uprising which was to be led by Rash Behari Bose but later on it was changed to 19th February.



German arms were to be delivered at three posts in Orissa. Owing to an accident the arms did not reach in destination. But the police had planted an agent Kirpal Singh in Rash Behari Bose's Party. Consequently, 'every thing was known to the police well in time. Bose and Pingley, another leading revolutionary figure, managed to escape. A large number of others, however, were arrested and prosecuted in a series of trails that are known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case and Lahore Supplementary Cases. The Special Tribunals that tried these cases, meted out "justice in the ruthless manner," even the Viceroy was much troubled by these cases, and he himself wrote ; "I absolutely declined to allow a holocaust of victims in a case where only six men had been proved to actually guilty of murder and dacoity. I had to assume the responsibility of committing the sentences of eighteen of the twenty four emend of death."

### **2.1.8 Assessment and the Causes of its Failure**

Thus ended without any tangible achievement an effort into the organisation of which much human energy, passion and idealism and money had gone. The stupendous and heroic effort was a total failure." The Ghadar Party survived the admonishments of the 1920. But this time it rose under the influence of communism and its operations were confined to the peasant movement in the Punjab.

In spite of its obvious lack of immediate or concrete success, the Ghadar Movement cannot be pronounced as a total failure in terms of the history of the Indian struggle for freedom. This movement continued to provide enthusiasm and inspiration till the end of the Indian national movement, cannot be disputed or dismissed. The use of international linkages, propaganda among the troops and revolutionary organisations were matters in which the Ghadar blue print did provide a pattern which could be suitably modified and adopted when the second World War broke out. This is clear from the history of the Indian National Army of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Whatever one might say in terms of the Indian national movement as a whole but in terms of its own immediate perspective, the Ghadar Movement has to be considered a failure. Perhaps this was inevitable in the circumstances of 1914- 1918. No revolutionary movement can succeed without the support of the people. When the Ghadarites came back to India in order to throw the British out, they overlooked the fact that their revolutionary and patriotic favour was not shared by very large sections of Indians; fear and apathy were rampant.

Even among the politically conscious sections of the Indians, either as a matter of conviction or as a matter of expediency, it was widely felt that the allied war efforts needed to be supported as the allied powers stood for democracy, and this support would not go unrewarded after the war was over, that is, in case the allies emerged victorious the kind of radical change in the attitude of the Indians towards the British rule that came about in the wake of

the Rowlatt Bills and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, was not a factor in Indian 'politics before 1918. It was very difficult therefore, to enlist people in India to the cause of revolutionary upsurge.

While Indian society at that time was incapable of backing the Ghadar Movement. The movement itself turned out to be pre-mature. Its organisation was too weak and ill organised to be able to stand up to-a powerful imperial nation like the Great Britain. We have already seen what happened in America to the Ghadar Party after Har Dayal's flight to Geneva. For that matter, even during Har Dayal's presence in the U.S.A the Ghadar Party was by no means a model organisation. As we have seen, Har Dayal himself did not know what exactly had to be done, or when and how that would be done. Eloquence and passionate idealism could encourage some people to fight for the motherland but without equipping them to face the entrenched. British imperialism with a real chance of success. The ease with which the British could infiltrate the ranks of the revolutionaries and find out their plans and checkmate them, is a clear illustration of the uneven match between the British Indian Government and Ghadar Party. As Emily C. Brown has put it : "It was soon to become apparent that no one really knew what anybody else was doing, not when, nor why-except, perhaps this British, whose spies and informers were equally active all over the world." (*Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 187).

Any discussion of the causes of the failure of the Ghadar Movement cannot be complete without an analysis of Har Dayal's role. It is true that he was a great patriot but he was not a great revolutionary, as he was not a sound tactician and strategist. He inhabited the world of ideas. Action was forced on him because of politics, but by temperament he was incapable of sustained action, Nor was it possible for him to observe real world of politics with the kind of close attention that enables a politician to keep suggesting or adopting tactical variations in response to variations in the actual situation.

Without being unkind to Har Dayal, it may be said that he never cared to even speculate on the chances of the success or failure of the movement of which he was the inspiring genius. What is worse is that he did not really feel morally responsible for the possible repercussions of its action based on his plans and exhortations. While inspired by his eloquence, thousands of Ghadarites were returning to India to translate into action his plan to overthrow the British, without realising the hazards to which they would be exposed, Har Dayal was planning to write a book on philosophy.

Difficult objective conditions could have been faced by the revolutionaries of the Ghadar Party if they had been blessed with imaginative and dedicated leaders. As things were, these conditions became inseparable in the absence of good leadership.

### 2.1.9 Summary

The details connected with the history of various revolutionary movements organised by the Indians against the British continue to be either the subject of controversies and difference of opinion among different writers and scholars are largely unknown. The situation in regard to the Ghadar Movement is that while most of the details are known, there are different versions of the same event or fact this lesson makes a mention of this fact. This would have marred the flow of the narrative. This fact is being mentioned here for the benefit of those students who care for these things. In my discussion I have mostly relied for facts on Emily

C. Brown. This is because, whatever the other merits of her book, Brown had done the most painstaking research for the collection of her material. The same cannot be said about the manner in which the other writers have collected their material.

In spite of discrepancies relating to the minute details of the Ghadar Movement, the general trend of the information available about the movement does not provide room for much disagreement, Conflicting or differing accounts relate to such minor material as to why precisely the decision was taken to all proposed newspapers by the name of Ghadar. Surely this is not a matter on which depends our assessment of the Ghadar movement. Those who care for such minute details may carefully go through Brown's *Har Dayal*, because she invariably mentions such differences in her book before giving her own account.

#### Self- Check exercise:

- Har Daya1 started a weekly paper in 1913, namely .....
- Ghadar Party was formed in 1913 in .....in USA.

#### Relevant Questions:

1. What do you know about the formation of Ghadar party?
2. Evaluate Ghadar party's revolutionary activities in Punjab.
3. Who were the prominent leaders of Ghadar Party?
4. How Ghadar Party managed to raise their funds?
5. Examine the causes of failure of Ghadar party.
6. Discuss Ghadar party's contribution in Indian freedom Struggle.

**Key Words:** Revolutionaries, Ghadar, Formation, Activities, Impact

**Suggested Readings:**

- P.R. Kalia (ed.), *The Ghadar Movement and India's Anti- Imperialist Struggle: Celebrating Centennial of the Ghadar Movement*, Progressive People's Foundation of Edmonton, Alberta.
- Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism-An Autobiography*, Patriot Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.
- Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party : A Short History*, Desh Bhagat Yadgaar Committee, Jalandhar, 2007.

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**LESSON NO. 2.2**

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**The Home Rule Leagues****Structure of the Lesson**

- 2.2.1 Objectives
- 2.2.2 Introduction
- 2.2.3 Circumstances
- 2.2.4 Mrs. Annie Besant enters Politics
- 2.2.5 Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League
- 2.2.6 Bal Gangadhar Tilak's Home Rule League
- 2.2.7. The two Home Rule League's In Operation
- 2.2.8 Government's Policy
- 2.2.9 The effect and Significance of the Home Rule Movement
- 2.2.10 Summary

**2.2.1. Objectives:**

- To examines factors responsible for the starting of Home Rule Movement.
- To examines the initiatives taken by Mrs. Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak to make it a mass movement.
- To evaluate the objectives, significance and its decline.

**2.2.2. Introduction:**

The Indian National Movement was at a low ebb when the first world war broke out. After the Surat Split (1907), the Indian National Congress had come under the complete domination of the moderates led by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The new spirit that had found manifestation in Indian politics as a result of the Partition of Bengal (1905') and the adoption of *swadeshi* and boycott as a new programme of action had given way to the cautions constitutionalism of the moderates. This was nothing short of a quick and complete anti-climax.

The anti-climax was quick because the new programme lasted barely

three years. It was complete because the congress now charged its very constitution and made it impossible for the extremists or nationalists as they were also called, to remain its members. This was done by making it obligatory for every Congressman to swear by the first article of its constitution, called the "creed" of the Congress. The first article laid down that Congressmen, would adhere to "constitutional means" and work for a study reform of the existing system of administration." This obviously meant that programmes like those of swadeshi and boycott which the extremists had forced upon the congress at its Benaras (1905) and Calcutta (1906) sessions would not longer be a part of the Congress scheme of action. Instead of quick strides towards *swaraj* through passive resistance and other means which could not be constitutional, the Congress lapsed into its old mendicancy and strove to move slowly and patiently towards a reform of the administration.

### **2.2.3 Circumstances**

The Congress consequently, once again became a club where arm-chair politicians met annually and talked in a more or less restrained and loyal language while debating country's problems. After the stirring activities and atmosphere produced by the anti partition agitation, what the Congress now offered was too dull an affair to interest the generality of people. In fact, this is what the moderates actually wanted. What made the pre-eminence of the moderates possible was the repressive policy followed by the British Indian Government towards the top extremist leadership. Aurobindo Ghosh was put behind bars as an under-trial. Soon after his release, he retired from politics and began his spiritual career at Pondichery. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was prosecuted and sent to Mandalay in Burma to serve six years 10 prison term. Lala Lajpat Rai took the clue and went abroad. So did Bipan Chandra Pal. A series of harsh measures were introduced by the government in order to crush extremist activities and propaganda.

Rendered leadership and faced with a government that was determined to crush them the rank and file of the nationalists went into hibernation for the time being. Some did react by taking to, revolutionary politics. But the situation was far from propitious for them. On the whole therefore, the enthusiastic spirit of politics which had begun in 1905, was substituted after 1907 by widespread passivity and demoralisation.

Such was the situation when the world war broke out in 1914. The war quickly transformed this situation. It was obvious that Great Britain and her allies needed Indian help. They also said that this war was being fought to save the democracy. It was not difficult to see that Britain's need could be

India's opportunity. Moreover, if the war was really a war for democracy, Indian could hardly be expected to take part in it willingly and effectively unless she was assured that she would also be allowed to partake of the boon of democracy.

The war broke the slumber that had set in after 1907. At the same time, at least two dynamic leaders emerged who were not only keen to use changed situation to Indian's advantage but were also capable of doing so. These two leaders were Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant. Released from Mandalay, Tilak was back among his admirers and followers who were only too eager to be given a lead. Mrs Besant was no stranger to India. Having first arrived here in 1893 as a member of Theosophical Society, she had meanwhile become a household word as a result of her passionate and forceful exhortations to India to become worthy of their glorious social, religious and educational reforms.

#### **2.2. 4 Mrs Annie Besant enters Politics**

While the war provided a sense of urgency to her political programme, Mrs. Besant had decided to enter politics around 1912. After having worked for years for the social and spiritual revival of India, She had began to fear that without political regeneration no other regeneration would be possible. But she also realised that the Congress, dominated as it was by the moderates, was not the right instrument for this purpose. Another reason that prompted her into politics was the danger of revolution, in case something positive and substantial was not done to improve the political condition of India. By 1913 she was talking of "the building up of India into a mighty self governing community."

By 1914 she was clearly elaborating her idea of self-government for India within the British Empire. In 1915 she was working at a very fast pace. She wrote a book entitled *India; A Nation*, to justify India's claim for freedom as a nation. She also wrote a series of articles called "*How India Wrought for Freedom*" which later on appeared in the form of a book. She started two journals, *The Commonwealth* on 2nd January, 1914, and *The New India* on 14th July, 1915 (to coincide it with date of the fall of Bastille) to inspire people and prepare the case for India's self- government. Meanwhile she also visited England to plead the case of India and consider the possibility of starting a pro-India party in the Parliament. Though the mission failed but she did rouse sympathy for the Indian cause through her public speeches wherein she declared that "the price of India's loyalty is India's freedom." Mrs. Besant was an extra-ordinary writer and speaker who could sway the hearts as well as the minds of the people. An idea of how she meant a phenomenon in Indian politics can be had by going through some extracts from her writings of the

period. These extracts will also convey an idea of her conception of the Home Rule. What does India want?" asked Mrs. Besant and went on to answer:

"She wants everything that other nation may claim for itself. To be free in India as the Englishman is free in England. To be governed by her own men, freely elected by herself. To make and unmake ministries at her will. To carry arms, to make her own army, her own navy, her own volunteers. To levy her own taxes; to make her own budgets; to educate her own people, to irrigate her own lands; to mine her own ores; to mint her own coins; to be a sovereign nation within her own borders, acknowledging the paramount power of the imperial crown and sending her sons to the Imperial Council. There is nothing to which any man can aspire in his own land from which the Indians must be shut out here.

Anticipating the reaction of Englishman to such a demand on behalf of India, Mrs. Besant added :

"A large claim you say. Does the Englishman asks less for himself in England ? If no what is their strange if an Indian should ask the same for himself in India? What is the radical difference between them which should make an Indian 'content' to be a thrall?"

She also laid bare the destructive effects of the British rule in India. Pointing to the causes of Indian suffering she said, "the drain of Indian wealth to England, the exorbitant cost of the alien rule, the ever increasing military expenditure, the sacrifice of Indian industries, the land tax ever rising and condemning the peasantry to perpetual indebtedness and to hopeless poverty and semi-starvation that have no parallel in any other civilised nation. It is these facts, covered up by officials but laid bare by the Congress which make Home Rule necessary if a catastrophe is to be avoided."

Justifying Home Rule as India's salvation, She added; "Only by winning Home Rule can India secure her material prosperity; only thus can she save what is left of her trade, her industries and her agriculture improve them and reap the results of her own labour."

To the argument that India should continue to do her duty during the war and rely on the British sense of justice and fair play and that she would be rewarded for her services after the war. Mrs. Besant gave a very simple reply. She said that as a Britisher she knew her countrymen better than any Indian could ever hope to know them; they could not be expected to part with power voluntarily, especially a power which meant such immense material gains.

While this is how she tried to disabuse the minds of those loyal moderates who pinned faith in the British, Mrs. Besant herself appealed to the British common sense and self-interest in order to persuade them to



concede the demand for Home Rule. She said: "The fate of the British Empire hangs on the fate of India and therefore, it is but wisdom and prudence to keep India contented by granting Home Rule to her." In spite of such appeals, she realised the need for action in India and went ahead to organise it."

### **2.2.5 Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League**

It was against this background that Mrs. Besant conceived the idea of Home Rule League, On 25th September, 1915, she formally announced her decision to launch a Home Rule League which was to function as an auxiliary of the Indian National Congress with Home Rule for India as its sole objective.

At the Bombay session of the Congress (1915) she moved a resolution for the adoption of Home Rule. This resolution was ruled out by the Congress President on the ground that it was in violation of the first article of the Congress constitution which circumscribed the demand for self-government to the objective of working for "a steady reform of the existing system of administration." However, a compromise was worked out. It was decided that the All-India Congress Committee would work out the draft of a Home Rule scheme by 1st September, 1916 that would be in accordance with the Congress constitution.

This compromise, in fact turned out to be just an evasive device adopted by the moderates who were afraid of letting Mrs. Besant organise a nationwide movement under the aegis of the Congress. No action consequently was taken by the All-India Congress Committee in regard to the proposed Home Rule scheme. Mrs. Besant refused to be daunted by the calculated callousness of the Congress. After the deadline of 1st September, 1916 was over, she considered herself free to embark upon the Home Rule project on her own. She knew that with the help of the countrywide network of the Theosophical Society it would be possible for her to organise her new agitation even without the blessings of the Congress.

One year after Mrs. Besant had announced her plans; the Home Rule League was formally brought into existence in September, 1916. She became the President of the League, G.S. Arundale, the organising Secretary, and C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, one of the Secretaries. Within no time two hundred branches of the League came up in different part of the country like Bombay, Kanpur, Allahabad, Mathura, Calicut, Ahmedabad and Madras. Initially most of the members were Theosophists. In Bombay for example, of the first 70 members only two were non-Theosophists. But as the government came down upon the Home Rule movement with a heavy hand, people belonging to different political shades, including the moderates, embraced its membership. This we shall discuss after a while.

### **2.2.6 Bal Gangadhar Tilak's Home Rule League**

Though the idea of Home Rule was first formally mooted by Mrs. Besant, Tilak was the first to give it an organisational form. After his release from Mandalay in 1914, Tilak found that while renewed political action had become imperative in view of the war he was disqualified *from* entering the Congress as a result of its, the first article of its constitution. But he also found that his popularity had not suffered during the year of his forced absence (imprisonment 1908—1914) from the political scene, and that on the contrary, there were many who were waiting for his lead. Tilak was thus free to act independently of the Congress.

While Tilak was planning his course of action, two deaths took place that changed the very equation of power within the Indian National Movement. Within ten months, the moderates were deprived of the leadership of their two stalwarts. Gokhale died in February, 1915 and Pherozeshah Mehta in November, of the same year. Much as he lamented the loss, Tilak could not but realise that he was now the foremost national leader. It was worth entering the Congress and taking advantage of its organisation

In fact, even before these unfortunate deaths took place, negotiations had started for the re-entry of the nationalist or extremists into the Congress. Mrs. Besant had been very keen that Tilak and his followers should be back in the Congress, Tilak and Gokhale had also been corresponding with each other in his connection.

Even after Gokhale and Mehta had been removed for ever from the scene, it was not clear as to when Tilak would be able to establish his control over the Congress, and the time was a precious factor. So he decided to organise action outside the Congress even while trying to get into it. Tilak even exploited the possibilities of working with the proposed Home Rule League of Mrs. Besant but she discouraged him on the ground that some of his followers disliked her and some of her followers disliked him.

Tilak had no option but to go on his own. He explained: "The chief thing in our opinion is to get swaraj for India and therefore, to make a demand to get it." In a forthright and a lucid article in the "Maharatta", Tilak explained the situation in which he was obliged to start the Home rule agitation He said, "It was generally recognised that the time had positively come for an organization to be started for educating public opinion and agitation for Home Rule throughout the country. The Congress was the body which naturally possessed the greatest authority for undertaking such a work with responsibility. The scheme of self-government which the Congress is

supposed to be intending to hatch, served as a plausible excuse for most of the moderate's to negative a definite proposal to establish a Home Rule League. But the Congress, it is generally recognised, is too unwieldy to be easily moved to prepare a scheme for self-government and actively work for its political success. The spadework has got to be done by some one. It can afford to wait no longer. The League may be regarded as a pioneer movement and is riot intended in any sense to be an exclusive movement."

In this way Tilak successfully exposed the moderate dominated Congress; kept the door open for willing Congressmen to join the League; and left himself and his followers the freedom to join and control the Congress.

Thus on 28 April, 1916 i.e. four months, before Mrs. Besant's League was born Tilak's Home Rule League, Joseph Baptista, Tilak's legal adviser and aide, became the President of this League, M.C.Kelkar became its Secretary, and D. Y.Gokhale its under Secretary. Tilak himself held no office.

### **2.2.7. The two Home Rule League's In Operation**

Though there were two Home Rule Leagues in action, there was no conflict or over lapping in their work. Whatever might have been their underlying difference of difficulties, both Tilak and Mrs. Besant readily agreed Tilak's League would operate in Maharashtra and the Central provinces while Mrs. Besant's League would have the rest of the country for its operation. It did not mean that the two main leaders would not visit each other's areas. Mrs Besant for example, addressed a public meeting in poona with Tilak in the chair, and two leaders were together in Allahabad in connection with the Home Rule agitation.

Mrs. Besant through the columns of her *Commonweal* and *News India*, and Tilak through those of the *Mahratta* and *Kesri* sent out inspiring propaganda in favour of Home Rule. Besides, both of them undertook lecture tours, Branches were opened to organise activities at the local level. Efforts were also made to receive the *swadeshi* movement.

### **2.2.8 Government's Policy**

The stupor which had set in after 1907 was gone. The whole country was humming with activity and filled with hope. The government was beginning to be alarmed. The home Member of the Government of India Reginald Craddock expressed the concern of the authorities in unmistakable terms when on January 17, 1917 he wrote: "The position is one of great difficulty. The moderate leaders can command no support among the vocal classes who are being led at the heels of Tilak and Besant. Home Rule is pressed as the only salvation from innumerable wrongs and Grievances under which India is suffering.... Under the cover of constitutional agitation, the minds of people

who read newspapers are being poisoned against the British Government.”

The Viceroy appealed to the Secretary of State for India to help the Indian Government by permitting it to make at least a formal statement of the kind of concession that Indians could hope to get from the British. He wrote almost in panic: “Mrs Besant, Tilak and others are fermenting with great vigour the agitation for immediate Home Rule, and in the absence of any definite announcement by the Government of India as to their policy in the matter. It is attracting many of those who hitherto have held less advanced views. The agitation is having mischievous effect on public feeling throughout the country.”

Eventually the Secretary of State of India was obliged to make his momentous declaration of 20th August, 1917 regarding the British policy in India. In the course of this announcement he specified that British policy, in India was that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view of the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. “ The Secretary of State also added that substantial steps should be taken in this direction as soon as possible.”

But before announcing this concession, the authorities decided to deal with the Home Rule agitation by means of force. Mrs. Besant G.S. Arundale and B.P. Wadia were interned by the Madras Government in June 1917. Securities of New India were forfeited by one Government to the tune of forty thousand rupees.

This high-handedness however boomeranged on the government. Anticipating her internment, Mrs. Besant had a stirring statement which virtually turned the tables against the authorities. She wrote: “The world will learn how India is governed, and that while England asks India to fight autocracy and drains her of her capital to carry on the war, England’s agents use all the methods of autocracy in India in order to deceive the world into the idea that India is well-governed and is content.” What Mrs. Besant could not achieve as a free person, was achieved by her internment. Home Rule became live issue for the whole of India. Prominent India leaders who had kept aloof from the League in defence of their political opinions now jumped into fray. Some of these prominent politicians were M.A. Jinnah, M.R. Jayakar, Moti Lal Nehru. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru C.R. Dass, C.Y. Chintamani, B.G. Homiman and Bhulabhai Desai.

The internment of Mrs. Besant and her associates provided an occasion for international propaganda for India’s Home Rule. Within eight days of the internment, Sir Subramaniya Aiyer, a retired judge who had also acted as the chief justice of the Madras High Court, boldly championed the cause of the Home Rule League. He sent a letter to President Wilson of the U.S.A in

which he wrote: "At present we are a subject nation but an immediate promise of Home Rule-autonomy for India would result in offer from India of at least 5,000,000 men in three months for service at the front, and of 5,000,000 more in another three months." This letter had immediate effect and it was widely publicised in the U.S. Press. A Home Rule League was established in New York, and a Home Rule delegation was sent of the U.S.A. a job that was inspired largely by Tilak.

Within three months the internment orders were withdrawn. But its effect on public opinion could not be removed.

On the other hand, Tilak was also subjected to similar high-handedness. A case was brought against him on the basis of two of his articles justifying Home Rule for India. Moreover he was asked to furnish a security of twenty thousand rupees for his good behaviour for a period of one year. When the magistrate found him guilty. Tilak appealed to the Bombay High Court where he was successfully defended by M.A. Jinnah, and the order was set aside.

As Government's attempt to crush the movement failed and the membership of the Leagues continued to increase. Tilak directed his attention towards the Congress. He had already staged a triumphal re-entry into the national organisation at its Lucknow session in 1916. Now he proceeded to dramatise the hold of the Extremists over the Congress by having Mrs. Besant elected as its President for the Calcutta session of 1917. The effort with which this was managed, also indicated that the general political climate in the country was undergoing a significant change. For the Congress, considering its history, it was a momentous development that it was having as its President someone who had been interned by one provincial government (Madras) and externed by two others, Bombay and C.P.

The Calcutta Congress was a triumph for the Home Rule movement. Apart from a record attendance of nearly five thousand delegates-during the session when the moderates dominated the Congress the average attendance was around four hundred. There was the significant fact that in her Presidential address Mrs. Besant used a language that was for the first time heard from the mouth of the Congress chief, a language that unequivocally demanded Home Rule for India. Mrs. Besant said. "I once said in England: The condition of India's loyalty is india's freedom. I am now add the condition of India's usefulness to the Empire is India's freedom. This tone and language characterised the Congress deliberation henceforth.

Meanwhile at the annual session of his Home Rule League at Nasik in May, 1917 Tilak had given his famous call: "Swaraj is my birth right and I shall take it. So long as it is awake within me, I am not old, no weapon can cut this spirit, no fire can burn it, no water can wet it, no wind can dry it I

am young in spirit though old in body.”

### **2.2.9 The effect and Significance of the Home Rule Movement**

The most important effect of the Home Rule movement was that it provided a sharpness and lucidity to the basic objective of the Indian National Movement. The ‘Creed’ of the Congress was no longer taken seriously. Self-government became the central as well as the immediate issue of Indian politics. In his Presidential address at the Calcutta Congress in 1907 Dadabhai Naoroji had also pleaded for *Swaraj* but the moderate interlude that followed the Surat split (1907) shrouded the idea of *Swaraj* in thick evasive verbiage to such an extent that under the Congress ‘creed’ it became impossible to work seriously and sincerely for this ideal except, of course in terms of “a steady reform of the existing system of administration” as already mentioned. The Home Rule movement resurrected the spirit of 1905-1907.

Besides clearly enunciating the goal of the national movement, the Home Rule Leagues also contributed towards strengthening it by carrying it to areas and people where the moderates would have been frightened of spreading it. The two Leagues, more particularly that of Tilak took the movement to villages. Women were also brought into the movement. This was the beginning of the kind of mass politicisation that later Mahatma Gandhi was to accomplish on a much larger scale. Tilak, in fact, had a great advantage in this respect. For he knew the language-coarse, simple and studded with popular, allusions that the common man understood to well-that alone could politicise the people, and he was only too willing to speak this language.

The Home Rule movement thus ensured that the Congress would no longer remain the sacred preserve of the drawing room politicians. It would rather be controlled by leaders who were willing to take to politics as a whole time service of the country. Tilak perhaps was the first politician of the kind. Now there would be others to follow him. As for Mrs. Besant, she made it clear that unlike her predecessors, she was determined to act as the Congress President for the whole term of a year that she had been elected for. Form an innocuous honour, the Presidentship of the Congress was converted by her into an office that entailed serious work and required qualities of leadership. Similarly, the Congress sessions ceased to be an annual *tamasha* (fun).

Another significant effect of the Home Rule movement was that the case of India’s independence became something of an international issue the letter written by Subramaniya Aiyer to President Wilson as mentioned earlier, and the interest that it generated in the cause of India is an illustration of

this. Apart from this, special efforts were made to induce the British Labour Party to become interested in India. Tilak, during his visit to England, contributed two thousand pounds to the Labour Party's election campaign fund. In return he elicited the assurance from the Labour Party that "we support the aspirations of the Indian people for freedom. And henceforth our Party will afford you every possible assistance."

### **2.2.10 Summary**

The Home Rule movements thus began at a time when the situation created by the war was demanding immediate and purposeful action, but the only recognised national political body, the Indian National Congress was both unwilling and incompetent to undertake this important work. Within two years, the Home Rule movement had not only transformed the political climate in the country, it had also transformed the Congress in such a manner that the separate existence of the Home Rule Leagues had been rendered unnecessary. The new spirit released by the Home Rule movement could not be crushed.

The alignment of personalities and forces that the Home Rule movement brought about could not be expected to last for ever. In fact, some of those who had been impelled by Mrs. Besant's interment to join her League in spite of their different political opinions, resigned from it within a few months. But what is important, is the fact that the lines of development that the Home Rule movement laid down for the Indian National Movement were not drastically changed during the three decades for which the Indian freedom struggle continued after the Home Rule Leagues had done their part.

### **Self – Check Exercise:**

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak started Home Rule Movement at.....
- Mrs. Annie Besant was from .....
- The aim of Home Rule movement was....
- Slogan of Home Rule Movement was....

### **Relevant Questions:**

1. Who first started Home Rule Movement?
2. What do you know about Home Rule league movement in India?
3. Write an essay on impact of Home Rule movement on Indian Freedom Struggle.

**Keyword:** Home Rule, Strike, Procession, Peace, Swaraj, Movement, Progress

**Suggested Readings:**

- Gopi Nath, *The Home Rule movement in India*, Acme Publications, Delhi, 1986.
- Raj Kumar, Rameshwari Devi and Romila Pruthi, *Annie Besant: Founder of Home Rule Movement*, Aavishkar Publications, 2001.



**M.A. (HISTORY) PART II  
(SEMESTER-III)****PAPER IV****(CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPEMENT AND NATIONAL  
MOVEMENT IN INDIA FROM 1858-1930)**

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**LESSON NO. 2.3**

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**The Lucknow Pact Historical Background****Structure of the lesson**

- 2.3.1 Objectives
- 2.3.2 Introduction
- 2.3.3. The Immediate Background
- 2.3.4 Principles of the Lucknow Pact
- 2.3.5 The Provisions of the Lucknow Pact
- 2.3.6 Assessment of the Lucknow Pact
- 2.3.7. Summary

**2.3.1 Objectives;**

- To study the circumstances responsible for the passing of Lucknow Pact.
- To discuss its principles and implementation.
- To evaluate its significance and impact on Freedom Struggle.

**2.3.2 Introduction**

The foundation of the All-India Muslim League in the last month of 1906 meant a serious challenge to the Indian National Congress which was wedded to the idea of non-sectarian national politics. The circumstances in which the League came into existence made it particularly difficult for-the Congress to court the co- operation of the League. The partition of Bengal in 1905, against which the Congress was mounting an agitation, was to the liking of the League because the partition had provided the Muslims of the east Bangal with a province in which they enjoyed a comfortable majority. Moreover, the Viceroy had given an assurance to the Muslims that at the -the coming constitutional concessions to the Indians, the British would make speical allowance for the Muslims. Obviously, in such a situation where the British Indian Government appeared something more than a mere benefactor of the Muslims, the Indian National Congress seemed to take a position that was antagonistic to the Muslim interests. The Minto-Morley Reforms which provided separate representation for the Muslims, practically confirmed the hopes which the

Muslims had been entertaining.

Within five-years of the foundation of League, however, Muslims began to have second thoughts about the prudence of their dependence on the government. This happened because of a series of development in India and outside. The partition of Bengal was annulled in 1912. If the Muslims had seen the partition in 1905 as an indication of official softness towards them, it was natural that the undoing of the partition should have been viewed by them as a departure from that policy. It could, in fact, be something worse, a positive tilt towards the Hindus. In any case, implicit faith could no longer be placed in the British Indian authorities.

Feelings about the undesirability and unreliability of the British as allies were further strengthened by the developments in the Muslim countries outside India. The Italian invasion of Tripoli in October 1911, and the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 agitated the Indian Muslims. The agitated like the other Muslims all over the world. It seemed that the Christian countries of the Europe were determined to shatter Turkey, the home of Caliph at and the centre of Muslim attention from different parts of the world. Then came the first world war in which Turkey joined the Central powers led by Germany and as such became an enemy of Great Britain and other Allied powers.

The developments during 1911-1914, in fact, widened and strengthened the Pan-Islamic sentiments among the Indian Muslims. The fact is that such sentiments had begun to be used even earlier by events like the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, and British involvement in Egypt. During 1911-1914, this Pan-Islamism particularly coincided with anti-British feelings of varying intensity as it was realised that Britain was favourably disposed towards the enemies.

From the beginning there was a wave of enthusiasm for Turkey among the Indian Muslims. There were prayers for the success of Turkey during the Balkan wars. Monetary subscriptions were raised; and volunteers were sent. The same however could not be done during the first world war for fear of stern action by the government. In fact, some Muslim leaders like the Ali Brothers and Maulana Azad were sent behind the bars for pro-Turkey propaganda. While such incarcerations provoked anti-British feelings; apparently little was done that would invite official reprisal.

### **2.3.3. The Immediate Background**

Muslim opinion was thus building up in favour of altering the policy of loyal cooperation with the government which the League had been following since its inception in 1906. This gave the Congress a chance to seek the cooperation of the League which it had no possibility of obtaining in 1906 and there after. Now there were prominent leaders who realised the imperative need

of forging a united front against the British in the struggle for political reform. They were clear in their minds that 'this needed to be done even if in the process certain excessive concessions had to be made to the Muslims. As early as 1911, a conference was held at Allahabad to iron out Hindu-Muslim differences and provide the basis for *reapproachment* Gopal Krishan Gokhale warned the conference that 'Muslim fear of being dominated by the Hindu majority should not be lightly treated. Gandhiji also stressed that "Hindus should yield up to the Mohammedans what the latter desire, and that they should rejoice in so doing."

Both the Congress and the League were thus moving in direction of mutual understanding. The first major step in this regard was taken by the muslim League at its Lucknow session in 1913, where it adopted a new constitution. Following the Congress, League adopted the ideal of self-government within the British Empire, and resolved to achieve the new objective by seeking national unity and working in co-operation with other communities.

While friendly overtures were being made by the two sides, the first world war broke out. Soon it became obvious that the old system of governance would not last long and that a new installment of reforms was, just a matter of time. The realisation imparted a sense of urgency to the task of bringing about Congress League *reapproachment*. For years the British had obstructed real political reforms on the ground of Muslim-Hindu differences. The Congress realised that the case for far reaching reforms would be infinitely strengthened if demands could be made on behalf of the country as a whole without a dissenting voice being raised by the Muslim League. Hence Congress eagerness to win over the League was there.

The imminence of constitutional changes affected the attitude of the League also. It could no longer, in view of the developments during 1911-1914, blindly trust the British. Whatever might have been its experience of the congress in the past, it could hardly hope to promote the interests of the Muslims without a friendly understanding with the congress which was bound to become more powerful after the reforms had come. Sheer expediency, if nothing else, made it necessary for the League to ally with the Congress.

Another consideration also pointed to the direction of an alliance with the Congress was argued at the time that the basic cause of British ambition in the Muslim countries was Britain's desire to strengthen her hold over India. It was therefore necessary to push the British out of India or at least to make their link with India more or less formally in order to save the Muslims of the world from aggressive and hostile British designs.

This does not mean that the League was replacing its earlier blind faith in the British by a blind faith in the Congress. What it aimed at was some

agreement with the Congress regarding the system of elections and distribution of the administrative posts incorporating guarantees for the Muslims in a future constitution which would be drawn upon co-operation with the British. Nor was there, complete unanimity about the prudence of cooperating with the Congress. But the dominant trend of opinion within the Congress and the League, however, appreciated the need for mutual understanding and cooperation.

These developments apart, there were at that time two powerful leaders who lent all their force in favour of a Pact between the Congress and the League.

M.A. Jinnah in the League and the Tilak in the Congress were wedded to the cause of unity. Jinnah who later became the architect of Pakistan was a political disciple of Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India. He was moreover a personal friend of Gokhale. He had also been member of the Congress. It is significant to note here that when, while in England, Jinnah was persuaded by Mohammed Ali and Wazir Hasan to join the Muslim League, he had done so on the assurance that "Loyalty to the Muslim League and the Muslim interest would in no way and at no time imply even the shadow of disloyalty to the larger national cause to which his life was dedicated." After the first world war broke out, Jinnah redoubled his efforts for bringing about cooperation, unity and goodwill "between the Mohammedans and other communities of the country."

Tilak who had returned from Mandalay after completing a six-years prison term, was by the end of 1905, the most important Congress leader. It is doubtful if the Congress could have been so easily and convincingly persuaded to arrive at an agreement with the League. If Tilak had not thrown all his weight in favour of a pact for there were element within the Congress as within the League who had resisted concessions to the other side even though larger national considerations demanded a compromise. Luckily, Tilak was respected by the orthodox and conservative sections within the Congress. These were precisely the sections that considered any compromise a sign of weakness. They decided to submit when they found their leader pressing for such a compromise. Tilak knew what he was doing. He also knew how many among his own followers were feeling about what he was doing. Answering the criticism that the Hindus had "yielded too much", he said: would not care if the rights of self-government were granted to the Mohammedan community or any other section of the Indian community. The fight then will be between them (The British Government) and the other sections of the Indian community and not, as at present, a triangular fight."

A significant tactical advance was made in 1915. The Congress and the League held their annual sessions at the same place and within the same

week. This practice was maintained for the next few years until the Congress and the league again parted company. When the League met a Bombay on 30th December, 1915 three Congress members- Mrs Annie Besant, Mrs Sarojini Naidu and Gandhiji-sat on the platform as a gesture of goodwill.

But this first attempt at showing a 'united front' clearly revealed the difficulties that obstructed the search for unity. When the session began on the first day, fifty police officers took in their places within the hall in order to prevent it and control any untoward incidents. Yet there were some attempts at disputing the meeting which, however, continued peacefully after the initial disturbance. But on the second day there was a regular uproar, and the meeting broke up under the very nose of the police. Jinnah and his supporters were obliged to leave the hall. They resumed their deliberation in a room in the Taj Mahal Hotel.

At Bombay Jinnah proposed the formation of joint committee of the League and the Congress to draw up the blue print on political reforms for India. The idea was that this committee should be able to enunciate the irreducible minimum of reform that should be demanded from the government. In April, 1916, the joint committee was formed. The committee succeeded in preparing a scheme of political reform which was finally adopted by the league and the Congress separately at their annual sessions which were held at Lucknow in December, 1916. That is why this scheme is called the Lucknow Pact.

#### **2.3.4 Principles of the Lucknow Pact**

The Lucknow Pact contained provisions that related to the Hindu-Muslim question and to the general question of political reforms. As regards the latter, the provisions of the Pact did not differ substantially from the scheme of reform which the nineteen Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council had submitted in September, 1916. The real importance of the Lucknow pact, however, lies in the provisions that made it possible for the Congress and the League, the two chief political organisations in India at the time to present jointly a charter of political demands for India.

The main principles of the Lucknow pact were communal representation and communal veto. Though the Indian National Congress had consistently opposed the principle of communal representation as being corrosive of the very idea of national unity. But after the Minto-Morley Reforms had conceded separate representation to the Muslim, it would have meant a vain search for Hindu-Muslim unity if the Congress had insisted on the Muslims first giving up such a valuable privilege to which they were now legally entitled. Jinnah, while making fervent appeals and efforts for unity, made it clear that the irreducible minimum between the League and tile Congress would have to include the principle of separate representation. He explained the Muslim

position with remarkable lucidity.

“As far as I understand, the demand for separate electorates is not a matter of policy but a matter of necessity to the Muslims who require to be roused from the common and torpid into which they have fallen for so long. I would therefore appeal to my Hindu brethren that in the present state of position they should try to win the confidence and trust of the Muslims, who are, after all, in the minority in the country. If they are determined to have separate electorates, no resistance should be shown to their demands.

By this time, Congress leaders were conscious of the need for unity even if this was at the cost of concessions to the Muslims. Consequently the Lucknow Pact provided for separate electorates. For the sake of unity the Congress had accepted what it had always considered detrimental to national unity.

The second principle that underlay the fact was that of communal veto. This was something which the Congress had accepted as a principle in its own annual deliberations. Communal veto meant that if 75% members of a particular community within any legislative council thought that a particular measure was against the interests of their community, that measure would be dropped without further discussion.

### **2.3.5. The Provisions of the Lucknow Pact**

The following are the important provisions of the Lucknow Pact:

1. Adequate provisions were to be made for the representation of the important minorities by election and the Muslims were to be represented through special electorate on the Provincial Legislative Council in the following proportions:

Punjab: one half of the elected Indian members. United Provinces : 30% of the elected Indian members. Bihar: 25% of the elected Indian members.

Central Provinces: 15% of the elected Indian members. Madras: 15% of the elected Indian members.

Bombay: One-third of the elected Indian members.

In view of this reservation it was laid down that barring constituencies representing special interests, no Muslim would participate in any other elections to the imperial or Provincial Legislative Councils.

As for the Imperial Legislative Council, the Muslim representation was fixed at one-third of the elected Indian members.

2. No bill or a clause thereof a resolution introduced by non-official member affecting one or the other community would be proceeded with if three-fourth of the members of that community in the particular legislative

council, imperial or Provincial opposed the bill, clause or resolution.

3. The Council of the Secretary of State for India would be abolished, and the Secretary of State for India would occupy the same position in regard to the Government of India as that occupied by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in relation to the governments of the self-governing colonies.

4. Half of the members of the Governor-General's Executive Council would be Indians elected by the elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council.

5. The Government of India would not ordinarily interfere with the local affairs of the Provinces.

6. The imperial Legislative Council would have complete control over the Government of India, except in military and foreign affairs.

7. Four-fifths of the members of the provincial legislative councils would be elected by the people directly on as broad a franchise as possible.

8. The provincial legislative councils, would have full control over the provincial governments, the head of which would not ordinarily belong to the Indian Civil Service or any of the permanent services.

9. Executive officers in India would have no judicial powers entrusted to them, and the judiciary in every province would be placed under the highest court of that province.

In effect, thus, the Lucknow Pact provided for a joint demand by the League and the Congress that from a dependency India should be raised to the status of an equal partner in the empire as a self-governing dominion.

Armed with the support of the Muslim League and strengthened by the re- entry into its fold of Tilak and other nationalists (extremists), the Indian National Congress was now emboldened to tell the government that "the time has come when His Majesty the King-Emperor should be pleased to issue a proclamation announcing that is the aim and intention of British policy to confer self- government of India at an early date."

### **2.3.6 Assessment of the Lucknow Pact**

While everyone seems to agree about treating the Lucknow Pact as a landmark in the history of the Indian national movement and constitutional development, authorities are divided in to their assessment of the impact it had on the future course of the Indian politics. Widely divergent in fact contradictory, opinions have been expressed about this aspect of the Pact. The following examples will illustrate this point. R.C. Majumdar considers the Pact as the cornerstone of Pakistan. He writes:

"the Congress action in 1916 well and truly laid the foundation on which

Pakistan was built up thirty years later. A compromise on the fundamental basis of Indian nationality, once begun, was bound to lead to further and further compromises till the whole foundation gave way.”

(The compromise mentioned by Majumdar refers to the acceptance by the Congress of the principle of separate representation for Muslims).

As against this, Tara Chand looks upon the Lucknow Pact as a vindication of the idea of Indian unity. He writes:

“The Lucknow Pact was an emphatic refutation of the theories that agreement between Hindus and Muslims was impossible under any circumstances because of their religious differences. The Pact showed that there was no inherent, infallible and impossible barrier which could not yield to the spirit of accommodation, common sense and reason.”

“The Lucknow Pact was the achievement of two political bodies dominated by leaders possessing similar ideological backgrounds and intellectual approach. Jinnah, Muhammad Ali, Ansari, Raja of Mahmudabad on the one side, and Majumdar, Surendranath Banerjee, Moti Lal Nehru and Tilak on the other spoke language, mutually comprehensible. Terms like home rule, responsible government, constitutional amendments were on the tongue of both. If the Congress at Lucknow was comprised of the moderats and extremists, the Muslim League enjoyed the support of the advanced wing of the intellectuals and the Ulemas.”

Ram Gopal finds fault with the Lucknow Pact on the basis that it did not represent the emergence of a single political community in India. Rather, it was the outcome of a mutual agreement on the part of the Hindus and, the Muslims to treat, and respect each other as two distinct communities.

In view of the wide divergence of scholarly reactions to the pact, it is difficult to say much about it that would meet with the approval of people with different intellectual and cultural orientations. However, certain points can be suggested which would enable a student to form his own judgement about the Pact.

A basic point which ought to be kept in mind is that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League was in a position to write on a clean slate. The ‘givens’ of the Indian situation of that time could not be arbitrarily set arise by any party. The alternative before the two parties in other words, were limited. Only out of these limited options did they have to work out a mutually acceptable compromise. Moreover, given the uncertainty of the situation and the legacy of distrust of the Congress, it was difficult to collvince the generality of the politically conscious Muslims that an alliance with the Congress, involving some conscious to the Congress, was called for in the interest of the Muslims themselves. Similarly, it was difficulty for the



Congress leaders working for the Pact to convince their followers and other Hindus that the concessions made to Muslims were required in order to forge a united front vis-a-vis the British. Both the parties had made some concessions, and these were, interestingly enough, magnified as an ignoble surrender by those Hindus as well those Muslims who were incapable of appreciating the need for Hindu Muslim unity.

But while it was natural for many Hindus and Muslims in 1916 to react sharply and unintelligently, even community, to the Pact, it does not behave the present day students of history to project their particular bias into a controversy of the past. What is this particular bias? It stems from an obstinate refusal to treat nationalism not as a sacred phenomenon but as an on going development in history. Because we take Indian nationalism for granted, and insist on judging modern Indian history from the single point of view of whether a united India was promoted by a certain development or hampered by it, we fail to take an objective view of the more delicate events in our modern history.

To come back to the specific issue of the Lucknow Pact, the best way to judge its significance in our history is not the basis of how in our opinion it affected the course of subsequent history; the best way rather is to assess it in the light of the alternatives that were at that time available to the Congress and the League. We have already seen that the Muslims were determined to the stick on to separate representation. What could the Congress have achieved by persisting in its earlier course of resisting separate representation? Politics, as the saying goes, is the art of the possible. And the Lucknow Pact was an exercise in discovering the irreducible minimum that would be acceptable to the Muslims as well as the Hindus.

Adverse reactions to the Pact, in fact, are its best justification. They show that the authors of the Pact were shrewd men of politics who were willing to take bold and rather unpopular decisions for the sake of long-term and larger gains. Once the principle of separate representation and slight weightage to a minority community had been accepted, both the Congress and the League agreed to make necessary accommodation and concessions in practice. The Muslims got as a result of this principle, one-third of the elected members in the Imperial Legislative Council, a number that was in excess of their demographic proportion. In the provinces where they were warranted by the proportion of their population. But at the same time, in provinces in which they constituted a majority, they got less than their demographic proportion. In Bengal for example, where the Muslims enjoyed majority, the percentage of seats allotted to them under the Pact was short of their demographic proportion by about 14 percent. So glaring, in fact, was this difference that while accepting the general proportion fixed by the Lucknow Pact, the Government of India refused to accept the proposed allocation of seats for

Bengal and increased the number of Muslim seats.

Inherent in the Lucknow Pact was the certainty of adverse reaction from both, for Muslims and the Hindus. To have risked such adverse' reactions is illustrative of the political acumen of the people like Jinnah and Tilak and the others who successfully persuaded their respective organisations to accept the Lucknow Pact. If as an incidental result of the Pact, the Hindu Mahasabha became the forum for ventilating the grievances, supposed the real, of the community inclined Hindus, the fault certainly was not that of the Congress leaders who had paved the way for the Lucknow Pact. Communalism among both the Hindus and Muslims was one of the 'givens' of the contemporary Indian situation. As such any compromise with the League 'would have aroused the hostility of communal Hindus like any compromise with the Congress would have provoked the hostility of similar elements among the Muslims. It is against this background that the Lucknow Pact should be seen.

As for the agreement that the Pact did not represent the fusion of a single political community, the point that requires consideration is whether in the circumstances of 1916, it was possible to conjure into existence a united political community comprising both the Hindus and Muslims. This could have been possible only over a period of time and as a result of conscious human intervention in the unfoldment and interaction of historical forces. The Lucknow Pact was one such attempt at eventually bringing about the emergence of such a political community. As is clear from Jinnah's appeal to the Hindus to concede the demand for separate representation, the concession was intended to create a situation in which, with the passage of time, the Muslim fears about being lorded over by a hostile Hindu majority would have been set at rest.

This, in the circumstances of the time, was the only hope for those who wanted Hindu-Muslim unity. To argue that by conceding separate representation, the Congress confirmed the claims of the League to be recognised as the sole representative of the Muslims, and damaged its own claim to speak for the whole of India is to miss the simple point that separate representation was a fact of Indian politics which existed irrespective of whether the Congress liked or disliked it. To oppose it meant to strengthen Muslim fears regarding their fate in an India ruled over by the Hindu-dominated Congress. These fears might not have been based on reality but they were real fears none the less. For years the Congress had insisted on disregarding such fears, and the result had been increasing Muslim indifference or hostility towards it, culminating eventually in the establishment of the All-India Muslim League. Further disregard of the same fears would have kept the two organisations and the two communities in a state of suspended or active antagonism. A leap was attempted by both the organisations when they

concluded the Lucknow Pact. And it was not altogether a leap in the dark.

Even Majumdar, who criticises the Congress for the Lucknow Pact, admits that at this time nationalism among both the Hindus and the Muslims was based “in relation and historical tradition of past glory and greatness.” If that is so, how can he expect that the Congress in 1916 should have persuaded the Muslims to eschew their sectarian loyalties and to join the Congress in demanding self-rule on the basis of franchise exercised without any reservation?

### **2.3.7. Summary**

To conclude our discussion, for the first time in the history of the Indian national movement a united voice was raised for self-government for India as a result of the Congress League Pact of 1916. This was also the first time, what the Pact made possible was not rendered impossible by the Pact itself. That would be an absurd proposition. If the achievement of 1916 could not be repeated or sustained the reasons *for* the failure ought to be seen in larger forces that operated in the post-Non-Cooperation period and not in the agreement arrived at by the Congress and the League in 1916.

### **Self Check Exercise:**

- Lucknow pact was signed on.....
- The main Congress leader of the Lucknow Pact was.....

### **Relevant Questions:**

1. Which were the parties that signed the Lucknow Pact?
2. What were the main provisions of Lucknow Pact?

**Keywords:** Minorities, Pact, Religious, Muslim, Legislative Councils, Nationalism, League, Unity

### **Suggested Readings:**

- Mushirul Hasan: *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India 1916-1928*.

**M.A. (HISTORY) PART- II  
(SEMESTER-III)****PAPER-IV: GROUP C, OPTION (iii)****Constitutional Development and National  
Movement in India from 1858-1930****LESSON NO. 2.****Author : Dr. V.N. Dutta****Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and Its Impact on  
National Struggle for Freedom****Structure of the Lesson**

- 2.4.1 Objectives
- 2.4.2 Introduction
- 2.4.3 Motives
- 2.4.4 Sir Michael O Dwyer's Rule
- 2.4.5. Situation at Amritsar
- 2.4.6 The Massacre
- 2.4.7. The Motives
- 2.4.8 The Conspiracy
- 2.4.9 The Impact
- 2.4.10 Summary

**2.4.1 Objectives**

- To study the main objective of General Dyer behind shoot out order at Jallianwala Bagh.
- To examine the causes led to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
- To explore about the government's policy of repression
- To examine the reasons and impact of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre on national movement.

**2.4.2 Introduction**

Brigadier General R.E. Dyer, rather big in built and about fifty years old, accompanied by his aide de camp Captain F.C. Briggs went to Jallianwala Bagh from his headquarters (Ranjit Singh's baradari in Ram Bagh at Amritsar) and reached the narrow entrance to the Bagh between 5 and 5.15 p.m. on 13th April 1919. He got out of the motor-car and advanced up the alley followed by the troops, Briggs gives an eye witness account as under :

*"Coming to the end of the alley we saw an immense crowd of men packed in a square listening to a man on a platform who was speaking and gesticulating*

*with hands. It was very hard to estimate the size of the crowd. The General asked me what I thought the members were and I said 5000 or so, but I believed it has been estimated at a more than 25000.*

The sky was overcast and the dust disturbed by the crowd in the Bagh added to the gloom. Dyer stood on a raised platform inside the entrance for a while, stationed 25 Gurkhas on the left, and 25 Baluchies on the right and ordered firing. It was about 5.15 p.m. At first the crowd shouted back 'Phokian', 'Phokian' (meaning blanks imagining that was just a bluff). But they quickly lost their illusions however as people began to crumble and fall, Dyer directed his troops to fire in the thick of the crowd. Briggs plucked at Dyer's sleeve as "if in pain," and according to his bodyguard who stood about four paces rear. Dyer was quite calm and rational; 1650 rounds of 303 mark were fired within 'ten minutes' and there were two pauses of about a minute each during which Dyer surveyed the scene before him. The ammunition was almost exhausted. The Bagh looked like a battlefield with the corpses scattered about in heaps and the wounded crying for help. Dyer along with the troops marched off the way he had come.

### **2.4.3 Motives**

The question arises what led to this somber tragedy which C.F. Andrews described as comparable as to only with the 'Glenco massacre'. Why did Dyer resort to this physical butchery? Without giving any warning to the crowd to disperse on pain of the fire to be opened firing continued even though people were running for their lives. Was there any provocation which forced Dyer to adopt this brutal course? Did the necessity of the situation warrant it? Winston Churchill, who studied minutely the whole base told his cabinet colleagues in London that the mostly crowd at the Bagh including children and probably one or two women, had no lethal weapons and therefore Dyer's apprehension of attack from this assembly were purely imaginary. Dyer was a highly experienced military officer who knew Punjab well. He was quite proficient in Urdu, Persian and Punjabi languages and was popular among Indian soldiers. Therefore his action in the light of his previous record when in moments of extreme provocation he had demonstrated exceptional sang froid; could not be a consequence of wild mercurial fits of passion which induce hysteric or psychic expression.

Dyer's act was not that of an individual swayed by wild passions on the spur of the moment but a culmination of serious political situation that was developing in the Punjab and particularly in Amritsar from early April 1919. Those who work on history realise that there is a historical process which operates at any given moment conditioning and influencing men yet perpetually conditioned by them. We could be putting the history of Jallianwala Bagh into the wrong universe, on academic utopia if we ignore the interconnectedness and continuities that underlie events.

The First World War had ended during the War. India had 'bled white' and contributed substantially in terms of money and material. People expected big political changes. Montague, the Secretary of State for India, had promised in August 1917 the "increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions." Towards the close of 1918 people were passing through hard times. The high prices of necessities increased the economic strain. Famine and riots were reported in different parts of the country, particularly in Madras and Punjab. In 1918, there was a general failure of monsoons and in 1912, India suffered on its worst harvest failures. Ravinder Kumar's micro-study of Lahore pinpoints that there was 100% rise in the prices of food grains, where as the pay packets increase of the artisans was only, 20% to 25%. The collapse of the people's Bank of Punjab's top Swadeshi entrepreneur Harikrishan Lal, was a further blow to the economic ambitions of the middle class. There was a feeling of general frustration in the country. The middle class buoyant with hope before the war was thus compelled to feel bitter, restless and petulant. In such a tense atmosphere, saturated with explosive material, the Government of India, headed by a highly- stung Viceroy like Chelmsford, decided to promulgate the Rowlatt Bills. These two Bills, one of which was immediately withdrawn, conferred extra-ordinary powers on the Government to make incursions on people's liberty. These Bills were condemned all over the country as an insult to the country. Gandhi described them as 'black acts' and Jinnah warned the Government that 'by passing the Bills you will create in this country from one end to the other, a discontent and agitation the like of which you have not witnessed.'

"The Bills acted as a red rag to the Indian people. They provided a rallying point for the disgruntled elements to unite, to consolidate and to fight the British bureaucracy. They provided to the Indian people just the right occasion to release their fury at the service done to them by the Sarkar. Was this the reward to India after the war for the service rendered by her? How ungrateful the British were? And how patient and co-operative the Indians had been? In such circumstances, the conflict between the two was inevitable. Gandhi inaugurated the Satyagraha agitation on 1st March 1919 and warned the Government that the fight against the Rowlatt Bills would probably be the most momentous in the history of India.

*Gandhi's Autobiography* gives the impression that the idea of *Satyagraha* had come to him in the flash of a moment. It seems to this writer that Gandhi had been sharpening his weapons for sometime. He was patient, shrewd and tactful and was waiting for the right moment to *show his hand*. He spoke a new idiom and introduced into the body politic of India, for the first time, a new method of agitation. *Satyagraha* which caught peoples imagination and spurred them into action. The agitation for the repeal of Rowlatt Acts reached a climax on 6th April. On the whole, the country stood as one and what disturbed the

Government of India more than any thing else was the manifestation of Hindu-Muslim fraternity. Never before in the history of India had Hindus and Muslims stood together so close to each other with such an understanding and goodwill.'

#### **2.4.4. Sir. Micheal O'Dwyer'S Rule**

No where in India was the agitation against the Rowlatt Bills so intense as in the Punjab which had contributed 3,50,000 recruits during the war. It would be wrong to suggest that the Punjab was politically quiescent. Khushwant Singh in his *Ghadr* shows how the Ghadrites had made Punjab a place of their activities. Punjab was ruled over by the iron hand of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant-Governor who disliked the educated classes, whom he regarded as completely untrustworthy given over to noisy rhetoric and speculative abstractions. He considered it England's mission to teach India and not to learn anything from her deeper experiences. He was firm, impetuous, intepid, exacting and completely uncompromising. He was always in a furious jurry. He believed that the government was to order and the people to obey. He took the business in hand firmly and dealt with it without considering the consequences of his actions. He was constantly influenced by fixed ideas and emotional attitudes rather than by the dictates of pure reason. He never understood the currents of nationalism. He banned the seditious newspapers and the entry of outside leaders into the Punjab. When Raizada Bhagat Ram, a lawyer from Jullundur, told him that Gandhi had a 'soul force', O'Dwyer is reported to have thumped the table asserting that right answer to it was 'First force'. Gandhi held him responsible for then atrocities in the Punjab. It is possible that if Punjab had been governed by a tactful and cool-headed governor like Sir Harcourt Butler, O'Dwyer's counterpart in U.P. or if O' Dwyer had handled the situation like the Bombay or Delhi authorities, the Punjab would not have witnessed the disturbances of such magnitude which exacerbated internal racial feelings. What seems to have frightened O'Dwyer and other British officials was the remarkable Hindu-Sikh- Muslim unity in 1919 in a province noted both before and afterwards for its Communal divisions.

#### **2.4.5. Situation at Amritsar**

It was in Amritsar that the disturbances reached there climax. Since February 1919, Amritsar had been in the thick of political activity. Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlew, a barrister and Dr. Satyapal, a medical practitioner, had gained tremendous popularity among the people of Amritsar due to their eloquence, integrity and intense political agitation against the Rowlatt Bills. Ordinary people like shopkeepers, school teachers and labourers regarded them as heroes and a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. The Deputy Commissioner almost a nervous wreck and a puppet in O'Dwyer's hands thought Kitchlew and Satyapal as dangerous elements. From the end of March 1919, the political campaign against the Rowlatt Bills was gaining tremendous strength. Meetings speeches and demonstrations were almost a daily occurrence. Reports were also reaching. The local government at Amritsar of the grand success of the hartals

in Delhi and Bombay Kitchlew and Satyapal called for the hartal on 6th April in Amritsar which too proved a unique success. The Government took counter measures to stop it, but in vain. The people of Amritsar would seize every possible opportunity for expressing their resentment against the Government. The question arises why was it so? Firstly, it was due to the leadership of Kitchlew and Satyapal who were showing remarkable organisational skill in uniting the disgruntled elements. Secondly, the business community had greatly suffered in Amritsar due to the restrictions levied on their trade during the War and felt locked in a shifting grip due to the imposition of the new income tax. People were suffering due to the shortage of necessities and rising prices. The educated classes particularly the lawyer class, felt outraged at the insults hurled on it by O'Dwyer; so, the business community, the professional classes and the common people who worried only for their bread and butter found in Gandhi's call for the anti Rowlatt agitation of golden opportunity for ventilating their grievances. These factors do not explain full the reason why the political agitation took place on such a big scale. The Government was keeping a vigilant eye on the political activity in Amritsar and the C.I.D. under the direction of Dholan Dass and Sukha Singh gave to the people sufficient cause for provocation by their uncouth and tactless methods. The Government feared that the 'dangerous Sikh elements', inhabiting the surrounding areas of Amritsar might fish in the troubled waters. It must also be mentioned that the people of Amritsar were a solid, sentimental, 'boastful' and bold people capable of showing reckless courage, not mistaking a shadow for the substance.

And if any precise date is to be given when demonstrations in Amritsar reached their climax, when Jallianwala Bagh seemed almost inevitable, then one could unhesitatingly mentioned the 9th April, Ram Naumi Day, a Hindu religious festival which in the context to events assumed a far more significance than normal in Punjab. People poured into the city from the surrounding countryside and ordinary scenes of fraternization took place, an intelligent and sensitive witness at Amritsar, in the early days of April the dramatic upheaval was just round the corner. The local Government was helpless in the face of mounting demonstration of Hindu-Muslim unity. It felt as though it had lost the initiative and was to play only a subservient role. The Government was determined to restore its prestige. So it decided to strike. When Irwing saw the huge procession led by Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Bashir from the verandah of the Allahabad Bank, he looked absolutely shattered, his hands shaking in excitement. He felt outraged when he saw Muslim volunteers dressed like Turks, representing the Turkish Army. This he represented as a direct insult to the Crown. Dr. Kitchlew told this writer that the procession was orderly and meant absolutely no offence to the authorities. It bowed in respect of the Deputy Commissioner and prayed, God save the King. This writer cannot help thinking that the playing such a true at a moment when slogans of 'Gandhi-Ki-Jai,' 'Satyapal Kitchlew' Zindabad' were being raised, was bound to



cause offence to the authorities even if there was no intention of doing so. Next day, Kitchlew and Satyapal were called at Deputy Commissioner's residence at 8 a.m. and quietly bundled off to Dharamsala in motor cars. Consequently, shops in the town were closed and thousands of people collected and marched to the D.C.'s residence with a view of pleading for the release of their leaders. When the procession reached the Carriage Bridge, the last strategic point for preventing it from entering the civil lines where the D.C. and other British officers lived there was a direct confrontation between the people and the mounted troops.

The procession tried to move forward but the troops were determined to hold it. Eventually near the Foot Bridge, volleys of shots were fired and it is calculated that those killed were twelve and the number of wounded was twenty. The mob carrying the dead came back into the town and indulged in violence, killing five Englishmen and assaulted Englishwomen. Murder, arson and destruction had their sway. But on the 11th and 12th April, the city was absolutely quiet. The civil authority had completely broken down. It began to be freely said in the town *Aj Sada Raj Hai'* (it is our rule today).

#### **2.4.6. The Massacre**

Because of the events of 10th April Irwing had requested O'Dwyer for military reinforcement. To deal with the situation, Brigadier-General Dyer arrived at Amritsar on the 11th by 9 p.m. from Jullundur and held a hurried conference with the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police in the railway carriage at the city railway station. Thereafter Dyer went to the city *kotwali* (police-station) and brought the city Inspector Muhammad Ashraf Khan with whom he held a long interview. On the 12th April he had the city reconnaissance by an aeroplane. The 13th April was the Baisakhi Day which has a special significance for the people from adjacent who had come for a dip in the tank surrounding the Golden Temple. Dyer issued on the 13th April the proclamation forbidding the assemblies in the city. After the General's proclamation, a counter-proclamation was made by the leaders of the mob calling upon people to assemble that afternoon at 4.30 p.m. in Jallianwala Bagh, Dyer received at 4.30 p.m. definite information that a crowd had collected at Jallianwala Bagh. Accompanied by Captain F.C. Briggs he arrived at the narrow entrance between 5 and 5.15 p.m. and started firing without giving any warning and men started falling like leaves. Dyer, having fired, dispersed and returned to his headquarters.

#### **2.4.7. The Motives**

Why did Dyer do so? Why did he fire and continued firing? What was the provocation? And foremost question comes why did he fire without giving any warning to the assembled crowd? Surely the crowd collected was unarmed and peaceful. Even Winston Churchill said that it had no lethal weapons. Dyer had different various reasons for firing. Immediately after the event, he wrote to the

General Staff Division that his force was small and to hesitate might have induced attack. He believed that the speakers making seditious harangues in the Bagh were criminal revolutionaries. He thought that he was being mobbed and hemmed in his force was small and so under the circumstances, the only way to save the situation from deteriorating was to strike and strike hard. That was Dyer's understanding of the situation. But a few months later on August 19, when he appeared before the Hunter Committee and gave his evidence, he completely changed his ground and walked more like a hero lionized by the Anglo Indian press. In his sallies with Indian members of Hunter

Committee, he was some what bursque, curt and contemptuous. He said, "was no longer a question of dispersing the crowd but one producing a moral effect from a military point of view not only on those, who were present but more specially throughout the Punjab. "He did not confine himself to the matter in hand but began to take to wider considerations. His evidence reflects self righteous and impetuous temperament, but it aroused sympathy among his compatriots and perpetuated the Dyer legend which still persists among certain British circles. He justified the firing for reasons of personal safety and policy; he hinted also at the Afghan invasion and the Bolshevik intrigues which he regarded as a threat to the British security in India.

It is largely from Dyer's evidence that historians of Jallianwala Bagh have reconstructed the explanation for Dyer's action. Rupert Furneaux who produced the first authoritative work on Jallianwala Bagh efforts the explanation that while Dyer stood up the platform in Jallianwala Bagh, he was suffering from *arterial sclerosis*, which had a retrograde effects. The blood flowing to his brain became congested. Though he found the crowd still, he thought they were massing to attack him. His mind became confused and he resorted to firing. Arterial sclerosis causes impaired memory, confused thinking, delirium and fearful hallucination. Furneaux's explanation is ingenuous and original.

But Arthur Swinson knocked out Furneaux's theory on the basis of the evidence supplied by General Inski Anderson, whose theory is based on the statements of Gen. Dyer's body guards who were standing very close to him during firing. The examination of Dyer's health chart by Dr. Baldev Singh, the neurologist, from All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, New Delhi, confirms Swinson's view that Dyer was in possession of his senses and his 'faculties were alive and in good order'.

It seems to this writer that historians, while explaining Dyer's motive for action, gave ignored certain basic questions. In order to analyse Dyer's motives it is necessary to go over the story though from a different angle. As soon as Dyer reached Amritsar he was closeted with the Police Inspector, Muhammed Ashraf Khan, perhaps to acquaint himself with the local situation in Amritsar. It was unusual for a Brigadier-General to deal with a matter such as the Jallianwala

Bagh in person. The normal procedure would have been to have sent a junior officer with a small force. Why did he go to the Bagh himself? Why did he not take any civilian officer along with him? The Deputy Commissioner was not present either. He being exhausted, had gone to bed. Dyer had not consulted any of the Divisional or District officials. Even J.F. Rehif, Superintendent of Police, who had accompanied him part of the way was no longer with him in the Bagh. R. Plomer, Deputy Superintendent of Police, arrived after firing had begun. It ought to be mentioned that by then Martial Law had not been imposed. From the evidence available, it is clear that the decision to fire had been forged by Dyer before reaching the Bagh. He fired and continued firing even when the people were dispersing and running for safety from the volley of firing. There were no confrontation whatsoever. He fired for ten minutes continuously until his ammunition was almost exhausted. He fired high and low, right and left and was himself conducting the entire show. He was continuing to fire even though he saw that people were running for their lives. He decided the whole thing himself. What was the explanation? In view of the conjunction of various factors, the whole episode looks rather a conspiracy.

From the evidence it is clear that Dyer had laid the trap through the assistance of one Hans Raj who later turned an approver in the Amritsar conspiracy case on 23rd April. Hans Raj was a man of dubious character, but had been fairly active in the anti-Rowalt agitation. But when the prominent leaders of Amritsar had been arrested, he occupied almost the central position since 11th April. On 12th April at a brief conference of a few persons in Hindu School, it was he who had suggested the holding of a big meeting at Jallianwala Bagh. He announced it in public that Lala Kanahya Lal, a respective citizen of Amritsar, would preside over the Jallianwala Bagh meeting. This was absolutely a lie, Lala Kanahya Lal had not been approached for it and he denied having any knowledge of such a meeting. Just before the meeting in Jallianwala Bagh, Hans Raj was seen talking to some C.I.D. people quite intimately. When soldiers entered the Bagh there was naturally a commotion among people but Hans Raj assured them that the Government would not fire on them. In a note available in the Jayakar papers at the National Archives, New Delhi, there is ample evidence to show that Hans Raj acted as an instrument in Dyer's hands and had induced people through his contrivances to assemble in a place where Dyer could inflict a punishment. What could be more suitable than an open space like Jallianwala Bagh which was surrounded on three sides by tall towers and walls. According to Colvin, Dyer's biographer, Dyer confessed to his wife that to fight the rebels "it was necessary to get them somehow out in the open."

#### **2.4.8 The Conspiracy**

When the military arrived in the Bagh, Hans Raj is reported to have waved his handkerchief, came down from the Dias and on the pretext of proceeding to speak to the military, disappeared in the direction of the soldiers. We hear no

more about Hans Raj until 23rd April when he turns into an approver. He is not asked to appear before the Hunter Committee but was whisked away to Africa. M.R. Jayakar writes about Hans Raj that he was 'living on his wife and mother and was also in the play of the family.' C.F. Andrews and Madan Mohan Malaviya were convinced that Hans Raj was a tool of the Government from the beginning. Jayakar, who was closely associated with the Congress Enquiry Committee, was convinced that the meeting had been planned by Hans Raj and his associates with a view of making large number of people gather at the bagh. It is rather intriguing that neither the Congress Enquiry Committee nor Gandhi made any mention of Hans Raj's complicity in the pre-mediated act. Probably the Indian leaders thought that the highlight of the treacherous role of Hans Raj might expose the seamy side of the freedom struggle which would do more harm than good. Nor would any Government like to, far less the British Government to show any involvement in such a foul deed.

But why did Dyer resort to such means? Here one smells something of Robert Clive. When Dyer reached Amritsar on 11th evening, he was shocked and distressed to know that five of his countrymen had been murdered and one English woman chased and assaulted. This outraged him and he was determined to wreck vengeance. He had taken two armoured cars equipped with machine guns along with him, Kuccha Kauriawala where Miss Sherwood had to hide, was chosen by Dyer later for punishing the offenders and all men who passed that way, had to crawl, such a mentality had been fairly evident whenever Englishmen found that Indians 'a lesser breed attacked the ruling class, its property and worst of all its womenfolk'. Sir Charles Napier's treatment of the Amirs of Sind is well known and during the 1857 revolt, numerous innocent cases occurred when British forces destroyed lives, burnt down villages in retaliation of their families and their fellow countrymen. In his *Autobiography*, Bertrand touched on the same theme :

"The desire to protect one's family from injury at the hands of an alien race is probably the wildest and most passionate feeling of which man is capable."

In his report to the Army Council, Dyer revealed that it was the murder of his countrymen which had moved him to behave as he did and that such an action was essential to restore order and security in order to safeguard the lives and property of Europeans and law abiding Indians. He added that it was this motive which gave him the strength of will to carry out his duty.

By his action, Dyer saved Punjab, lost India.

#### **2.4.9. The Impact**

Edward Thompson, a distinguished historian who later became an Oxford don and a close friend of Jawahar Lal Nehru noted that one S.K. Datta while thinking of Jallianwala Bagh stood weeping and saying. "This ends the British connection with India. India was and could never be the same again. The die had been cast and the sun began to set on the British Empire which had

stimulated poets to ideologise its glory and expound its ethics." The Jallianwala Bagh episode marked a turning point in the political destiny of India. In fact, our freedom struggle acquires a national character after this incident and Gandhi emerged as a national leader. Just a few months after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Indian National Congress held its annual session at Amritsar in December 1919 which Jawahar Lal Nehru, who was not a technical historian but who had a profound historical sense, described as the

Gandhi Congress, Moderates were losing their ground and turning into extremist, Gokhale died in 1915, Dadabhai Naoroji in 1917 and Mrs. Annie Besant receded in the background. Tilak had gone to England at the close of 1918 to pursue his libel action against Sir Valentine Chirol. But Gandhi became "Wali" for the Muslims and "*Matahama*" for the Hindu. A few style of politics tinctured with a new idiom was evolved. It was an exhilarating experience to embark on all Indian political agitation against the British Government. In a sense, India had found himself, it was probably her finest hour, a tryst with destiny.

Moved by the severity inflicted upon the unfortunate people at Jallianwala Bagh Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood and wrote to Viceroy:

"The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinction, by the side of these of my countrymen who for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings."

Mahatma Gandhi who had supported England during her hour of trial in the recruiting campaign, returned in protest to the Government his Kaiser-i-Hind Gold medal and his Zulu war medal. C.F. Andrews felt outraged at the tragic event and expressed his horror at the cruelties perpetrated by a ruthless Government. He wrote to the Government :

"I cannot feel that this harassing of the educated classes, the dealing of blow after blow to their self respect will result in anything but evil, moderates are finding it hard to remain so."

Iqbal, the famous Urdu poet, hoped that the present murky period of India's destiny would pass away :

*Har zaegey chaman se yeh kehti hai khake bag Gaafel na reh  
jahan gardun ki chaul se  
sincha gaya hai Khune shhidaan se is ka tukhm Tu announ ki bukhi  
na kar is nihaal se.*

The dust of the garden says to every bird in the orchard Don't be remain indifferent to the way of Heaven

Its seed had been watered with the blood of martyrs Don't grudge to shed tears for his budding.

In her moving poem 'Punjab 1919' Sarojini Naidu expressed the same desire : O beautiful : O broken and betrayed, O Mournful : O Martyred Drauadi,

Endure thou still, unconquered, undismayed. The sacred rivers of the stricken blood.

Shall prove the five-fold stream of Freedom Flood. To guard and watch towers of our liberty,

Braham Nath Datta Qasir, a resident of Amritsar, summed up the new climate of the times in the following lines :

We know now what's good or bad We are no more yes-men.

### **2.4.10 Summary**

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre left a profound impact on the subsequent course of the national movement. Those were the days of glory, of Hindu-Muslim unity when Gandhi went to say that Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali were in his pockets. It shattered the myth of Punjab's loyalty to the British and infused a new style of politics in the freedom movement.

### **Self – Check Exercise:**

- Jallianwala Massacres took place on 13 April,.....
- Hans Raj Turned into an .....

### **Relevant Questions:**

1. What were the reasons and effects of Jallianwala Bagh massacre?
2. Write an essay on the Jallianwala Bagh massacres and its impact on Indian freedom struggle?
3. Who ordered shoot out at Jallianwala Bagh?
4. What Act led to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre?
5. Which Commission was appointed to enquire about Jallianwala Bagh Massacre?

**Keywords:** Speech, Gathering, Tragedy, Massacre, Unity, Ordered, Fervor, Shoot out

### **Suggested Readings ;**

- V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh A Groundbreaking History of the 1919 Massacre*, Penguin, 2021.
- Raja Ram, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre; A Premeditated Plan*, Publication Bureau, PU, 2002.

**Converted into Self Learning Mode by Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur.**

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**M.A. (HISTORY) PART- II  
(SEMESTER-III)****PAPER-IV: GROUP C, OPTION (iii)****Constitutional Development and National  
Movement in India from 1858-1930****LESSON NO. 2.5****Author: Prof. D.S. Chauhan****Gandhi's assumption of Leadership of National Movement and the  
Khilafat Movement****Structure of the Lesson**

- 2.5.1 Objectives
- 2.5.2 Introduction
- 2.5.3. Emergence of Mahatma Gandhi
- 2.5.4 Rowlatt Bill Satyagraha
- 2.5.5. Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy and Martial Law in the Punjab
- 2.5.6. The Amritsar Congress (December, 1919)
- 2.5.7. Khilafat Movement
- 2.5.8. Hijrat of Muslims
- 2.5.9. The Importance of the Khilafat Movement
- 2.5.10. Critical Comments on the Khilafat Movement
- 2.5.11. Summary

**2.5.1 Objectives**

- To study the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi in India's struggle for freedom.
- To evaluate the reactions against Rowlatt Bills and Jallianwala Bagh tragedy.
- To discuss the Impact of Jallianwala Bagh on Indian Freedom movement.
- To examine the circumstances responsible for the origin of Khilafat Movement.
- To assess the Hijrat of Muslims and significance of KJilafat Movement.

**2.5.2. Introduction**

The First World War had raised India's national aspirations but at the end of the war all those expectations were falsified and a wave of unrest swept through the country. The Montague Chelmsford Reforms had completely disappointed the nationalist parties. The Delhi session of the Congress (December, 1918) reiterated the demand for full responsible government and dominion

status for India. Other sections of the Indian populace were also aggrieved and agitated for different reasons. The masses had not forgotten the humiliating and forcible methods of recruitment and collection of money; the peasants were suffering acutely from the rise in prices and the industrial workers were subversion of the Ottoman Empire and the humiliation of the sultan of Turkey by Britain. The year 1919 became one of the most fateful years in the history of our freedom struggle. The year also saw the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as a leader of the national movement.

### **2.5.3. Emergence of Gandhi**

Gandhi returned to India on January 9, 1915 at the age of forty six after twenty years in South Africa and emerging as a hero of a vigorous and successful passive resistance against the white government of South Africa. He wanted to try his device of popular passive resistance of *Satyagraha* in India as well. But he was advised by his political *Guru* G.K. Gokhale to first make himself familiar with India before starting his experiment. In this period he toured the country and involved himself in the problems of peasants and labourers and also tried the efficiency of this weapon of *Satyagraha* in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad.

In Champaran (Bihar) where the poor and helpless cultivators were being exploited by European Indigo planters, he successfully defied in April 1917, the orders of the Commissioner to leave the district and was allowed to continue his investigations into their complaints. In 1911, Gandhi Ji advised the cultivators of Kheda district to resort to *Satyagraha* in support of their reasonable demand for the suspension of land revenue. Ultimately, a compromise was made between the government and the peasant. The same year, Gandhi again succeeded by means of *Satyagraha* in securing a reasonable settlement between the workers and the millioners of Ahmedabad (Gujarat). His successes in these agitations encouraged and strengthened his resolve to use the same technique on a nationwide scale in the liberation struggle against the British.

### **2.5.4 Rowlatt Bills Satyagraha**

The Government of India had appointed a committee, presided over by Justice Rowlatt to investigate the methods of dealing with the revolutionary crimes. On the basis of the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee, the government of Lord Chelmsford introduced two Bills, known as the Rowlatt Bills or Black Bills, in the Central Assembly. These Bills gave drastic powers of arrest, detention, search and summary trial by special courts. Gandhi condemned the bills and said that the bills were not just a 'story example of lapse of righteousness and 'justice' but 'evidence' of a determined policy of repression.' He considered it as a piece of devilish legislation and was mentally prepared to give a passive resistance, Gandhi told the Secretary of State. "This retention of Rowlatt Legislation in the teeth of universal opposition is an



affront to the nation. Its repeal is necessary to appear for national honour. The remedy he proposed was Satyagraha. In March, one of the Bills was passed as the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, in spite of the united opposition of all the Indian members of central legislature. To inaugurate his new struggle against the Government, Gandhi established a separate body called Satyagraha Sabha on 24 February 1919. This organisation concentrated on publishing propaganda literature and collecting signatures to a Satyagraha pledge. Gandhi himself had a whirlwind tour of whole of India including main towns of south. The Congress as such was not a part of it, Sumit Sarkar writes,

"What emerges from all this is that the organisational preparation was extremely limited and patchy and quite remarkably disproportionate to the storm which arose in April, 1919-20, the biggest and most violent anti British upsurge which India had seen since 1857. This movement seems to have been almost entirely urban, with lower middle class groups and artisans on the whole more important than industrial workers."

Gandhi also proposed that the country should observe a general Hartal all the people should suspend business for a day and observe it as one of fasting and prayers as a preliminary to Satyagraha. The date of the Hartal was fixed on 30th March 1919, but was subsequently changed to 6th April. The response to his call was amazing. "The whole of India from one end to other, towns as well as villages, observed a complete "Hartal on that day." In Delhi it was observed on March 30 (the date originally fixed).

Hindus and Muslims joined in a huge procession, which was checked by police firing and resulted in many casualties. In Bombay also a large procession marched through the city. As a result of this new movement, with this novel technique, Mahatma Gandhi emerged as an unquestioned all India leader.

### **2.5.5. Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy and Martial Law in the Punjab**

In the Punjab there was a feeling of deep frustration so the agitation there was more extensive and intensive than in any other province of India. Moreover, the Governor of Punjab Sir Michael O'Dwyer was inveterate enemy of nationalism. Gandhi was invited to visit Lahore and Amritsar, was stopped at Palwal (a few miles away from Delhi) and sent back under police escort to Bombay (9th April). This reaction caused disturbances in Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places. In the Punjab also people became angry. In this atmosphere, the District Magistrate of Amritsar arrested and deported two prominent leaders Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew on 10th April. The people of Amritsar were naturally incensed by this action of the authorities. Hartal was declared. A large procession marched through the main street and advanced towards the residence of the Deputy Commissioner, to plead for the release of their leaders. In order to check the progress of the demonstrators police resorted to firing in

which several persons were killed and wounded. Thereafter, the mob became furious and took its mad revenge by killing five Europeans, assaulting an English woman and burning the Town Hall, telephone exchange and two banks. This led to more firing, resulting in some casualties. On 11th, a big funeral procession of victims of police firing passed off quietly. But the same evening Brigadier General Dyer took charge of the law and order in Amritsar. Dyer began his work on the 12th by a number of arrests and the issue of a proclamation banning all meetings and processions. On the same day it was announced by the public leaders that a public meeting will be held at Jallianwala Bagh on 13 April at 4.30 p.m. General Dyer took no steps to prevent the holding of the meeting but arrived on the spot with troops and armoured cars soon after it had begun. Without any warning he ordered the troops to fire till the ammunition exhausted. According to official version about 379 were killed and more than 1200 were wounded but the actual figures were much more. The Jallianwala Bagh 'massacre' as it was called subsequently, was a deliberate act planned by the Punjab's Lt. Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Brigadier General

R.E.H. Dyer to strike terror in the hearts of the people. Martial Law was imposed in Amritsar on 15th April and also in many other districts of the Punjab between the 15th and 24th. The authorities administered Martial Law in the most brutal and barbarous manner. Reckless flogging and whipping arrests, confiscation of property and other humiliating punishments were mercilessly inflicted on the helpless people.

For some time "The Punjab was isolated and cut off from the rest of India." But gradually the news percolated to other places and a wave of horror and indignation swept the country. The nationalist press demanded the impeachment of O'Dwyer and the recall of the Viceroy Chelmsford. Poet Rabindranath Tagore renounced his 'Knighthood,' condemned the atrocities in the Punjab. The All-India Congress Committee (thereafter abbreviated as A.I.C.C.) appointed a Committee of C.R. Das, Fazl-ul-Haq, Abbas Tyabji and M.R. Jayakar submitted its report on 20th March, 1920. The Viceroy also appointed the Disorders Inquiry Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Hunter. Even the Government Committee could not cover up the misdeeds of the military, though they tried to explain the atrocities of the Brigadier General Dyer.

#### **2.5.6. The Amritsar Congress (December, 1919)**

The Congress met at Amritsar in December 1919 in the shadow of black events i.e. Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Punjab wrongs, unsatisfactory Montague- Chelmsford Reforms and the dismemberment of Turkey. Meanwhile the British Government had tried to soothe the anguish of the people by releasing most of the political prisoners and pushing the Reform Act through the Parliament on 23rd December, 1919.

The main issue before the Congress Party was whether to co-operate with

the constitutional reforms or to obstruct and reject them. The moderates were in favour of whole hearted co-operation but a strong section of the party led by C.R. Das and B.C. Pal wanted to reject them as being "inadequate unsatisfactory and disappointing." Tilak and N.C. Kelkar were in favour of "responsive co-operation." Gandhiji and Malaviya were in favour of accepting and giving them a fair chance of working. Ultimately a compromise was struck and C.R. Das's resolution with the amendment proposed by Gandhi was passed. The resolution read. "The Congress trusts that so far as may be possible they will work the Reforms, so as to secure an early establishment of full responsible Government and the Congress offers its thanks to Hon'ble Mr. E.S. Montague for his labours in connection with the reforms."

It was also decided to appoint a sub-committee under the Chairmanship of Gandhi, to consider the whole constitution of the Congress. The new constitution which was presented later revolutionised the working of the Congress.

In this session Gandhi, comparatively new figure in the Congress, established his position as a leader of the first rank, in the face of veteran leaders.

### **2.5.7. KHILAFAT MOVEMENT**

Just at the time when India was agitated and anguished because of Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Muslims were seething with discontent against the British policy towards the Sultan of Turkey. Muslims looked upon the Sultan as the *Khalifa* of Islam and naturally were uneasy regarding the attitude of the British Government towards Turkey, which had joined Germany in the war. Early in January, 1918, Prime Minister Lloyd George had tried to placate them declaring that Turkey would be treated fairly after the war. However in October, 1918, when Turkey capitulated, it became clear that the Ottoman Empire the sacred tomb of Islam would be dismembered. Under the circumstances, it was religious duty of every member of the faith to help the Khilafat. This was the origin of *Khilafat*. This was the origin of Khilafat agitation and its aim was the restoration of the temporal and spiritual jurisdiction of the Sultan. The Ulemas were fiery advocates of the Khilafat. The Khilafat agitation provided in the words of Gandhi. "Such an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Mohammedans as this would not arise in hundred years." So Gandhi urged the Hindus to give full support to the Khilafat movement which the Muslims planned to launch against the British Government.

The first *Khilafat* Conference was held in Delhi on 23rd November, 1919 and Gandhiji was elected its Chairman. This Conference advised the Muslims not to join the public celebrations of victory and held out threats of non-co-operation if the British did not solve the problem of Turkey satisfactorily. The release of Maulana Muhammed Ali and Shaukat Ali in December, 1919 gave great fillip to the *Khilafat* agitation. The Khilafatists and the Congressmen

assembled at Amritsar and decided to organise the Khilafat movement under the guidance of Gandhi.

The Khilafat Conference at Amritsar decided to send a deputation to the Viceroy on January 19, 1920; the deputation was sent accordingly but it did not get a satisfactory reply. The Khilafat Conference which met at Calcutta (February 20) under the Chairmanship of Maulana Azad, adopted a resolution in favour of non-co-operation. Shortly after, a deputation led by Mohammad Ali went to London and presented its case before the British Government on 17th March, but George's reply was most disappointing. In the meantime, on 10th March Gandhi had issued a manifesto in which he advocated the launching of a non-violent, non-co-operation movement if the demands of the Khilafatists were not granted, 19th March was fixed a day of mourning, fasting, prayers and *Hartal*.

In Delhi Khilafat meeting held on 15th March, 1920. The Committee consisting of Gandhi, Lajpat Rai, Ajmal Khan, Maulana Azad and Shaukat Ali was formed to examine Gandhi's plan of non-co-operation. It was in an atmosphere charged with unrest that the Congress Report on Punjab atrocities was published on 25th March. The time was ripe for united action, so in memory of Amritsar happenings a National Week was observed from 6 to 13 April.

A Gazette of India (Extraordinary) announced on 14th May the terms of the Peace Treaty (Treaty of Sevres) presented by the allies to the Sultan of Turkey, who was to be deprived of all his territories including the holy places of Islam. The Muslim in India were naturally filled with 'righteous' indignation against the British Government. The Report of the Hunter Committee (appointed by the Government of India) on Jallianwala Bagh massacre, published on 28th May, 1920, also offended Indian nationalists. The Congress leaders had hoped that the British Government would take appropriate action against the wrong doings but the Central Legislative Assembly afforded protection to all those who were connected with Punjab atrocities by passing an Indemnity Act. Lord Finlay's motion in the House of Lords, condoning Brigadier General Dyer, shocked all classes in this country. The whole atmosphere was tense and the nation was in a mood of defiance and retaliation.

The A.I.C.C. met at Benaras on 30th May to review the situation created by the Hunter Committee Report, the treaty of Sevres and the deficiencies of the Reforms Act, of 1919. Gandhi recommended a programme of non-co-operation for the country, but the

A.I.C.C. resolved to hold a special session of the Congress in Calcutta to consider Gandhi's plan.

The Central Khilafat Committee also met in Bombay and decided to resort to non violent non-co-operation. A Hindu-Muslim conference was held at Allahabad on June 1 and 2 Nehru, Rajgopalachari, Lajpat Rai, Chintamani,

Gandhi and other prominent leaders attended the Conference. Muslim leaders appealed to the Hindus to cooperate with them but Mrs. Besant and Sapru tried to dissuade the Muslims from the policy of non-co-operation.

In spite of this, Gandhi was convinced of the justice of the Muslim cause and was prepared to help them as best he could.

On June 9, the Central Khilafat Committee met at Allahabad and re-affirmed the principle of non-cooperation and enunciated four stages of the Non-Co-operation Movement:

- (i) Renunciation of Government titles and honorary posts ;
- (ii) Resignation from civil posts,
- (iii) Resignation from police and army.
- (iv) Refusal to pay taxes.

Further, the Committee also, sent a letter, signed by about 90 Muslim leaders to the Viceroy, informing him that if their demands were not accepted, they would be compelled to start Non-co-operation from 1st August, 1920. Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy explaining his connection with and his conduct on the Khilafat question and appealed to him to hear the just demands of the Muslims.

In July 1920, another *Khilafat* Conference was held in Karachi. It was attended by Gandhi who once again called upon the Hindus to help the Muslim. The Khilafat Committee issued instruction for starting the movement on 1st August.

An appeal was also made for the surrender of titles and honorary posts on that day.

### **2.5.8. Hijrat of Muslims**

On the other hand, hundreds of Muslims had already started on 'Hijrat' (flight) to Afghanistan and they felt that they could not stay in India under the British, after the Treaty of Sevres that England had made with Turkey, this movement started in Sindh and spread to North-West Frontier Province. Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his followers joined the '*Hijrat*' movement. Many people reached Afghan territory and some even crossed over the Soviet Union. During the months of July and August, 1920 about 18,000 Muslims left their homes on '*Hijrat*'. But very soon the Afghan Government forbade their admission to outsiders (*Muhajirins*). So the eyes of the Indian Muslims turned to their motherland.

On July 28, 1920, Gandhi gave a clarion call to the nation. "The 1st of August next will be as important an event in the history of India as was the 6th of April last year. The 6th April marked the beginning of the end of the Rowlatt Act. It must be clear to everyone that the power that wrests justice from an unwilling government in the matter of the Punjab and the Khilafat will be the power that will secure repeal of Rowlatt Act. And that power is the *Satyagraha*, whether it is

known by the name of civil disobedience or non-cooperation".

The non-cooperation campaign started on August as scheduled. Unfortunately B.G. Tilak, passed away on the night preceding the dawn of August 1. But, nevertheless, in 1920 the political struggle and Khilafat movements were development side by side and uniting in Gandhi's Non-Cooperation.

### **2.5.9. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT**

The Khilafat Movement, though it lasted for a short period, forms a very important landmark in the history of our national struggle. It led to certain noteworthy consequences in the political field :

- (a) Hindus and Muslims were drawn together for some time into the political struggle in increasing numbers. Religious emotions were deeply stirred. Religion and politics became confused. The orthodox Hindus and the middle class secular groups felt dismayed but the flood of emotion was too strong for them.
- (b) Muslim League lost its popularity for sometime and Muslim policies passed under the domination of the religious leaders. The Khilafat Committee and the jamiat-e-Ulema (founded in 1912) assumed leadership of the Muslim politics.
- (c) In the Congress, Gandhi's ascendancy was established and from that time onwards his policy became the policy of the Congress. Some moderates seceded from Congress to form the All India Liberal Federation.

### **2.5.10. Critical Comments on the Khilafat Movement**

Gandhi and the Congress had agreed to launch a mass struggle against the Government with the triple of winning Swaraj, rectification of Punjab wrongs and the rehabilitation of *Khilafat*. It meant the recognition of a purely communal and religious demand as of equal importance with the national demand for *Swaraj*.

Gandhi's decision was largely based on moral grounds. He believed that the Muslim cause was morally justified and therefore deserved support. The principles he enunciated were unexceptionable but according to Dr. Tarachand, "their application to Khilafat agitation was questionable; neither Gandhiji nor the Khilafatists realised that their objective was neither politically practical nor wholly justified. The sympathy of the Indian Musalmans with the Muslim countries was wholly idealistic and entirely impractical. They did not realize that international affairs cannot be determined or influenced by people however numerous who are not independent".

The maintenance of the Caliphate required the reinstatements of the Ottoman Empire but the Arabs were not willing to accept the resurrection of that rule. Muslims of other countries had not shown much interest in the matter. In fact the very question of holding the Caliphate by the Sultan of

Turkey was controversial." As to the Khilafat being a matter of life and death to the Muslims in India, events were soon to prove that it was a rhetoric or hyperbole and can hardly be regarded as a serious fact, for in less than five years the Muslims of Turkey usurped the right of the Caliph to a far greater degree than the British ever did... It appears that the *Khilafat* agitation was phase of the Pan-Islam Movement, to which Indian Muslim looked forward as a guarantee against the Hindu majority. Viewed from this angle, Khilafat question made a cut at the very root of Indian nationality.

### 2.5.11 Summary

There was no reason to suppose as the subsequent events proved that the Muslim leaders were inspired by genuine desire to make up their differences with the Hindus in order to win freedom. The Hindu-Muslim unity created during the Khilafat days proved to be short-lived. At that time the Muslim thought it expedient to talk of Hindu-Muslim unity in order to secure their support against the British imperialism. Gandhi with his high ideals were also swept by the dream of Hindu-Muslim unity. Thus, built on shaky and doubtful foundations, the Khilafat agitation spearheaded by Gandhi, though spread fast for a short period, could not lead to happy results in the long run.

### Self check exercise;

- The first *Khilafat* Conference was held in ..... on 23rd November, 1919 and ..... was elected its Chairman.

### Relevant Questions;

1. What do you know about Khilafat movement?
2. What was the purpose of the Khilafat Movement?
3. What did the Khilafat Movement support?
4. Examine the contribution of Khilafat movement in freedom struggle.

**Key Words:** Resistance, Satyagraha, organization, Punishments, Confiscation, Horror, Wave

### Suggested Readings;

- Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, Columbia University Press, 1982.
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**M.A. (HISTORY) PART- II  
(SEMESTER-III)****PAPER-IV: GROUP C, OPTION (iii)  
Constitutional Development and National  
Movement in India from 1858-1930**

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**LESSON NO. 2.6****Author: Prof. D.S. Chauhan**

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**Gandhi and the Non-Cooperation Movement****Structure of the Lesson**

- 2.6.1 Objectives
- 2.6.2 Introduction
- 2.6.3. How Mahatma Gandhi was led to Non-cooperation
- 2.6.4. Acceptance on Non-Cooperation by the Congress
- 2.6.5. The Nagpur Congress Confirmation of non-cooperation
- 2.6.6. The Programme of non-cooperation movement
- 2.6.7. Progress of the movement
- 2.6.8. Collection of Swarajya Fund and the success of the national Volunteer organization
- 2.6.9. Khilafat Committee's call to the Muslims
- 2.6.10. Government's Policy of Repression
- 2.6. 11. Chauri Chaura Incident (5th February, 1922) and the Suspension of the Movement
- 2.6.12 Reaction to the Suspension
- 2.6.13. Successes and Failures of the Non-Cooperation Movement (An Appraisal of the Movement)
- 2.6.14 Summary

**2.6.1. Objectives:**

- To discuss the programme and progress of non- cooperation movement.
- To examine the government's policy of repression.
- To assess the gravity of Chauri Chaura incident and the suspension of the movement.
- To evaluate the successes and failures of the non- cooperation movement.

**2.6.2. Introduction**

The year 1920 marks the beginning of a new era- the Gandhian Era-in the history of our freedom struggle. Launching of the non-violent non-cooperation movement by Mahatma Gandhi on August 1, 1920 was a unique event in the struggle for Swaraj (self-government) and a turning point in the history of the



Congress.

### **2.6.3. How Mahatma Gandhi was led to Non-Cooperation?**

The background of the Movement was an eventful as the movement itself. Gandhi was a co-operator with the British Government upto 1919 but within the next few months, he was transformed into an apostle of non-co-operation. The radical change in the attitude of the Mahatma was caused by a few important events which shock his faith in British fairness and sense of justice. In his own words, "The first shock came in the shape of a the Rowlatt Acts. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and culminating to the crawling orders public floggings and others unbearable humiliations.

In spite of the bitterness caused by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and other black events, the Congress, which met at Amritsar in December, 1919, was ready to give a fair trial to the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms though they were regarded as "inadequate unsatisfactory and disappointing". At the instance of Gandhi, the Congress even passed a motion of thanks for Montague. Thus, it is clear that Gandhi and many other Congressmen were still prepared to cooperate with the British in the vain hope that Punjab wrongs would be redressed and the Khilafat question would be settled satisfactorily. But the policy adopted by the British Government in the succeeding months falsified all such hopes, with the result that Gandhi and his supporters were driven towards non-co-operation.

The disheartening attitude of the British Government regarding the Khilafat questioned Gandhi to issue a statement on March 10th that "non-co-operation is the only remedy left open to us". The publication of the terms of Treaty of Serves on May 14, 1920, which dismembered the Ottoman Empire and destroyed Khilafat as temporal institution is an open betrayal of the promise given by the British Prime Minister. It filled the Muslims with indignation. Gandhi decided to start non-violent non-co-operation in support of the cause of the Khilafatists.

The Hunter Committee Report published on May 28, also proved a mere "whitewash", which belittled Dyer's crime as a "grave error" of judgement, based upon an honest but mistaken conception of duty.

This report and the deliberate show to the perpetrators of brutalities in the Punjab destroyed Gandhi's faith in the British sense of justice. On July 28, he announced that non-co-operation would be started on 1st August 1920, to redress the twin wrongs of the Punjab and Khilafat.

After the inauguration of non-co-operation on 1st August, Gandhi and Ali Brothers toured the country explained the meaning and implications of the movement and mobilised public opinion.

### **2.6.4. Acceptance on Non-Cooperation by the Congress**

A special session was held in Calcutta from 4th to 9th September, 1920

under the Presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai. At this session Mahatma Gandhi moved the fateful resolution on non-co-operation "to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent non-co-operation until the wrongs are righted and Swaraj established". Despite the opposition of C.R. Das, B.C. Pal, Malaviya, Mrs. Annie Besant, Jinnah and others the motion was carried by 1886 against 885 votes. After the Calcutta Congress, Gandhi made a hurricane tour popularising non-co-operation among the masses. He educated them in the new technique of the struggle and urged the Hindus and the Muslims to offer a united front against the British.

#### **2.6.5. The Nagpur Congress: Confirmation of Non-Cooperation**

The regular annual session of the Congress was held at Nagpur in December, 1920 under the Presidentship of Vijayaraghavacharia. There was unprecedented enthusiasm and more than 14,000 attended the session. The resolution on non-co-operation was confirmed. Even C.R. Das and Lajpat Rai and other stalwarts, who had opposed it at Calcutta, now supported it.

At Nagpur, Gandhi was also able to secure the approval of the new constitution which vitally altered the characters and organization of the Congress. The goal of the Congress now was "*Swaraj* within the British Empire if possible and without, if necessary". The means were changed from "Constitution" to "all peaceful and legitimate means." Thus the Nagpur session was a momentous one. It not only accepted the non-co-operation programme, but also the new constitution prepared by Gandhi. Thus Mahatma Gandhi became the acknowledged leader of the new movement for political liberation.

#### **2.6.6. The Programme of Non-Cooperation Movement**

The first thing that was emphasised in the resolution of the Nagpur Congress was that non-violence was an integral part of the non-co-operation campaign. The programme had two aspects : (a) negative or destructive and (b) positive or constructive. The negative or destructive part consisted of the following boycotts as passed by the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in September, 1920.

- (a) Surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies.
- (b) Refusal to attend Government offices, *darbar*, official and semi-official functions held by the government officials or in their honour.
- (c) Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by the Government, and establishment of national schools and colleges in various provinces.
- (d) Gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants and the establishment of private arbitration courts for the settlement of disputes with the help of lawyers.
- (e) Refusal on the part of military, clerical and labouring classes to offer

them- selves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia.

- (f) Boycott of elections to the reformed central legislature and provincial legislative councils.
- (g) Boycott of British goods.

The positive or constructive programme included promotion of *Swadeshi*, especially *Khaddar* or home-spun and home-woven cloth, removal of untouchability among Hindus. Promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity prohibition of the use of alcoholic drinks settlement of disputes through arbitration and panchayats. Further, a Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund of Rupees one crore was raised to finance the non-co-operation activities.

### **2.6.7. Progress of the Movement**

The response of the people to this remarkable campaign was enthusiastic beyond expectations. The country was profoundly stirred. Unparalleled scenes of devotion and sacrifice were witnessed everywhere. Throughout 1921, the movement acquired more tempo and vigour.

Several prominent lawyers such as Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Rajendra Prasad, M.M. Jayakar, Vithalbhai Patel, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalchari and others gave up their lucrative practice and plunged into the movement. Subhash Chandra Bose resigned from the I.C.S.

Quite a few distinguished Muslims like Maulana Azad, Dr. Ansari and Ali Brothers (Maulana Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali) also joined the struggle. Seth Jammalal Bajaj gave up his title and donated a lakh of rupees for the maintenance of the non-co-operation lawyers. Hundreds of other persons renounced their titles and honours.

Boycott of schools and colleges was quite successful. Thousands of students left colleges and schools run by the Government National schools, colleges and universities were started in different parts of the country such as the National College at Calcutta and Patna, the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, the Bihar Vidyapeeth, Kashi Vidyapeeth, Tilak Maratha Vidyapeeth and the Bengal National University. A number of students of the

Aligarh University also left it and founded the Jamia Millia Islamia, which was later shifted to Delhi.

The boycott of foreign cloth was quite successful. It was launched with bonfires of foreign cloth in every city and town. *Khaddar* became the national wear and hand spinning was encouraged. It attained considerable success in Bengal, Bombay, Madras and U.P; the boycott of liquor was also encouraging and in provinces the excise revenue of the Government was reduced.

As regards the elections boycott, only moderates and liberals contested for the Legislative Councils but all the Congress candidates withdraw and in main places the majority of voters abstained from voting. This exposed to the world that the Legislative Councils elected under the new Act, had no claim to

represent the people of India.

During the early phases of the Movement Gandhi and Ali Brothers succeeded in bringing about such a unity of aims and activities between the Hindus and the Muslims as was never witnessed before or has not been noticed ever since. This unprecedented cooperation between the Hindus and the Muslims for the common objectives was really a remarkable aspect of the campaign which perturbed the British masters.

In February, 1921, when the Duke of Connaught (uncle of King George V) came to India to inaugurate the "Reformed" Councils and also to assuage the Indian feelings he was greeted with hartals wherever he went. This was another success of the Congress campaign.

### **2.6.8. Collection of Swarajya Fund and the success of the National Volunteer Organization**

In March, 1921 the Congress Working Committee, which met at Vijaywada decided to raise a Swarajya Fund of Rupees one crore, to enlist one crore Congress members and to introduce 20 lakh Charkhas (spinning wheels) as constructive measures for intensifying the movement and broadening its base.

By July, 1921 the Swarajya Fund had been over-subscribed; 20 lakh Charkhas had been distributed and the membership drive reached little more than half the target. The National volunteer Organization which was recognized, did propaganda work for the national cause, collected donations, organised demonstrations and picketed against the selling of foreign goods and liquor.

**2.6.9. Khilafat Committee's Call to the Muslims :** The All-India Khilafat Committee, which met on 8th July, 1921 at Karachi under the Presidentship of Mohammad Ali, proclaimed that it was "unlawful for any faithful Muslim to serve in the British Army to help others to join the Army". As a result of this resolution, Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali and a few other Muslim leaders were arrested in September. Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress also came forward in support of Ali Brothers and called upon the Indians not to serve the British as civilians and more specially as soldiers.

**2.6.10. Government's Policy of Repression:** The Non-Cooperation Movement had a lot of ferment and commotion in the country, which caused serious worry to the British authorities. The Government of Lord Reading therefore adopted a policy of severe repression to curb the movement. The Congress and the Khilafat volunteer organizations were declared unlawful. The important centres of the agitation; public meetings and processions were consequently arrested. Thousands of people came forward to replace those who were consequently arrested. The policy began to charge and assault the volunteers indiscriminately, Hundreds of them were wounded and many were killed as a result of firing. Repression was more severe in U.P. However, people suffered imprisonment and injuries and the movement went on with gusto.

The Congress Working Committee decided to boycott the visit of the Prince

of Wales in November, 1921. When he landed in Bombay on November 17, the whole city observed hartal and a meeting was organised. But unfortunately the mob went out of control, resulting in rioting, clashes and bloodshed. Wherever the Prince went there were black flag demonstrations and hartals. In Calcutta the hartal was interrupted by a clash between the Khilafatists and the police.

It may also be mentioned in this connection that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya tried to bring about a peaceful atmosphere at the time of the visit of the Royal Prince. He persuaded Lord Reading to meet Congress leaders as a preliminary step towards rapprochement, but Gandhi put forward certain demands which the Viceroy turned down and the negotiations fell through.

By the end of 1921, all the important leaders except Gandhi were behind prison bars. The repressive policy of the Government was in full swing. The Moplah rising and Bombay riots made Gandhi uneasy. The Congress decided to organize individual "and mass civil disobedience". Gandhi exhorted the youth to join the National Volunteer Corps. The Congress also appointed Gandhi as the sole dictator to lead the new programme.

There was much enthusiasm in the rural areas of Andhra. Andhra Pradesh Committee secured the permission of Gandhi to start 'no-tax' campaign in Guntur. This was to be the first experiment in civil disobedience. The campaign started and the repression of the brutal type followed. In Bengal, Bihar and U.P. also peasants of certain villages refused to pay illegal taxes.

On February 1, 1922 Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy intimating that he would start a civil disobedience movement in Bardoli unless the government showed a change of heart by giving up its repressive policy within the seven days.

The Viceroy in his reply justified the policy of the Government and refused to withdraw the repressive law. It appeared as if "Mahatma Gandhi was riding on the crest of a wave and had no obstacles to encounter." (S.C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 87).

#### **2.6.11. Chauri Chaura Incident (5th February, 1922) and the Suspension of the Movement**

The attention of the whole country was now centred on Bardoli where Gandhi was ready to lead the Campaign in person. But before the expiry of the period of 7 days, there occurred a serious case of mob violence at Chauri Chaura, a small town near Gorakhpur in U.P. On February 5, 1922, an infuriated mob of 3000 persons, led by Congressmen, set fire to the Thana (Police Station) and burnt alive 22 policemen. In fact, before the people took this drastic action, there was great provocation by the police. The police force mercilessly beaten Bhagwan Ahir, the leader of the Eka agitators. Gandhi himself admits of provocation from the police. It was shocking to the Mahatma who felt horrified at the growing violence on the part of the people because other such cases were also reported from Bareilly and Madras, Mahatma Gandhi, believer in non-violence in thought and deed, felt that the people had not

imbibed the true spirit which was the base of his movement. He took it as a warning from God and made up his mind to suspend the movement. The Congress Working Committee, which met at Bardoli on February 11-12, confirmed his decision and resolved to concentrate on constructive programme.

### **2.6.12. Reaction to the Suspension**

The sudden stoppage of the movement which had raised the country to a very high pitch of enthusiasm came as a shock to many national leaders and sent a wave of resentment and anger among the rank and file of the Congress. C.R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lajpat Rai, Ali Brothers, Subhash Chander Bose and others bitterly criticized Gandhi's action. Subhash Chander Bose called it a "national calamity." Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, "We were angry when we learnt of this stoppage of struggle...The young people were even more agitated. Our mounting hopes tumbled to the ground..."

M.N. Roy saw in it a weakening of the leadership rather than of the masses. But there were others who favoured Gandhi's policy.

Gandhi had a hard time explaining the decision to his followers. At the A.I.C.C. meeting held in Delhi a few days later, a number of delegates particularly from Maharashtra and Bengal, strongly attacked Gandhi's leadership. But the Mahatma calmly withstood all the criticism and stuck firmly to his constructive programme. He wrote, "The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound and I venture to assure the doubters that the country has gained by my humiliation of error."

Taking advantage of the division among the nationalist forces and the waning popularity of Gandhi, the Government of Lord Reading arrested him on 10th March. According to Rushbrook Williams, "The arrest came when Gandhi's political reputation was at its nadir, when the enthusiasm of his followers was at the lowest ebb." The Mahatma was tried by the judge Bloomfield for spreading disaffection against the Government. The trial became historic because of the frank and dignified explanation given by Gandhi for his action, though he pleaded guilty to the charge. He asked the court to award him "highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen". The judge convicted him and sentenced him to six year's imprisonment. For the time being his voice was hushed.

With the imprisonment of Gandhi, the Non-Cooperation Movement came to an end. Soon after, the *Khilafat* question also became unimportant because Mustafa Kamal Pasha established a Republic in Turkey and abolished the Caliphate. The sudden suspension of the movement increased Hindu Muslim tension because the Muslim mind could not appreciate the implications of non-violence in a just cause.

### **2.6.13 Successes and Failures of the Non-Cooperation Movement (An Appraisal of the Movement)**

Judged purely from material results the Non-Cooperation Movement may be pronounced a failure. It could not bring *Swaraj* "within a year" as was promised by Gandhi and no conspicuous success was achieved in carrying out the different items of the Non-Cooperation programme accepted by the Congress. It could also not redeem the promise made to the Muslim in the matter of *Khilafat*. The Government could not be paralysed by boycott; and soon after Gandhi's arrest (on March 10) the lawyers began to return to courts, students to government schools and colleges and many politicians started thinking of returning to the Legislative Council. The hope of Hindu-Muslim unity proved to be illusory, towards the end of 1921, the Moplah, rising in Malabar, in which a large number of Hindus were slaughtered by the Muslim Moplahs, embittered the Hindus. The sudden suspension of the movement by Gandhi was bitterly resented by Muslims who felt they had been let down by the Congress leaders. The Muslim could never appreciate Gandhi's insistence on truth and non-violence.

Though the movement failed to achieve its declared objects yet it is difficult to concede that it was a failure. Infact, this first unarmed revolt against the British Empire was a momentous event in the history of our liberation struggle. From beginning to end, it was sustained by the enthusiasm, devotion and self-sacrificing spirit of the people who lacking in organisation and experience, had to fight against the British Government which had almost unlimited resources. It was a fight between what Gandhi called "the soul force" and the "material force."

The struggle had not been fought in vain. In the words of Professor R. Coupland, "Gandhi had done what Tilak had failed to do. He had converted the nationalist movement into a revolutionary movement."

As Griffin has also written, "What had been almost totally an affair of the educated few, became the concern of every Indian, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, lawyers shopkeepers or agriculturists - Gandhi taught India a new self-respect which could content with nothing less than self-government, Gandhi who had himself learned from the British the meaning of justice and freedom, imparted those ideas to his countrymen with such success that the Indian nationality became a reality and Indian nationalism a unanimous expression of the feelings, of the Indians." (Griffth, *Modern India*, p. 67).

This movement has been criticized by some communist writers as a bourgeois movement on the plea that "such forms of militant mass action as the industrial workers" general strike or the struggle of peasants for land against the burden of rent and debt were not at all envisaged and when it happened later, were frowned upon by *Gandhi*"(Hiren Mookerjit Gandhi - A Study, pp.57-58). But such denunciations overlook the historical setting of the

movement, hence it is difficult to accept them.

Secondly, the Non-Cooperation Movement, by accepting and emphasising the constructive programme evolved by Gandhi, i.e. removal of social evils like untouchability and drinking initiated a process of social regeneration which revolutionized the entire structure of the Indian society. The programme of starting national educational institutions, popularizing the use of *Khadi* (suitable to rural needs) boycotting of foreign goods and setting up of panchayats were such things which began to eat into the vitals of the British Raj in India and the bureaucracy began to feel a deep concern about the Empire.

There was a great deal of truth in the following passage from the Presidential Address of Shri C.R. Dass at the Gaya session (1922).

"It is assumed that a movement must either succeed or fail, whereas the truth is that human movements - I am speaking of genuine movements - neither altogether succeed nor altogether failed. Every movement proceeds from an ideal and the ideal is always higher than the achievement. Was the Non-Cooperation Movement in India success? Yes, a mighty success when we think of the desire for *Swaraj* which it has succeeded in awakening throughout the length and breadth of this vast country. It is a great success when we think of the practical results of such an awakening, in the money with the nation contributed, in the enrolment of the members of the Indian National Congress and in the boycott of foreign cloth. I go further and say that the practical achievement also consists of the loss of prestige suffered by educational institutions Government run and the courts of law and the reformed Councils throughout the country. Yet it must be admitted that from another point of view, when we assess the measure of our success in the spirit of arithmetic we are faced with the 'the petty done' and the 'undone vast' to our critics : I admit we have failed in many directions but will you also not admit our successes where we have succeeded?"

#### **2.6.14. Summary**

The movement had created a new spirit of freedom and fearlessness. There was a general awakening of the masses to their political rights and privileges. Ordinary people, man, woman, rich and poor were ready to endure hardship and punishment. The fear of the British Raj was gone. It was the first political movement which has a predominantly mass character. So even if Non-Cooperation Movement failed to bring *Swaraj* at that time, it was merely a temporary retreat in the long drawn struggle for freedom. As Gandhi himself explained, "The fight that was commended in 1920 is a fight to the finish, whether it lasts one month or one year, many months or many years."



**Self- Check Exercise:**

- The Congress Working Committee decided to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales in .....
- A serious case of mob violence at ..... a small town near Gorakhpur in U.P. On February 5, 1922, an infuriated mob of 3000 persons, led by Congressmen, set fire to the .....and burnt alive 22 policemen.

**Relevant Questions:**

1. What do you know about Non-Cooperation Movement.
2. What were the causes responsible for the starting of non- cooperation movement?
3. Why did the non-cooperation suspended by Mahatma Gandhi?
4. Discuss Mahatma Gandhi's contribution in non-cooperation movement.

**Keywords:** Movement, Co-operation, Peaceful, Violent, Explosion, March, Satyagraha, Followers

**Suggested Readings:**

- P.C. Bambford, *Histories of non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements*, Manohar, 2019.
- B.M. Taunk, *Non-Cooperation Movement in Indian Politics, 1919-1924: A Historical Study*, Sandeep Parkashan, Delhi, 1978.

**M.A. (HISTORY) PART- II  
(SEMESTER-III)****PAPER-IV: GROUP C, OPTION (iii)****Constitutional Development and National  
Movement in India from 1858-1930**

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**LESSON NO. 2.7****Author: Dr. S. Kadirvel**

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**FORMATION OF THE SWARAJIST PARTY AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN  
POLITICS****Structure of the Lesson**

- 2.7.1 Objectives
- 2.7.2. Introduction
- 2.7.3. Gandhi and Indian Politics
- 2.7.4. C.R. Das and the Leadership Tangle
- 2.7.5. Non-Cooperation
- 2.7.6. Council Entry and the Congress
- 2.7.7. Mahatma Gandhi in jail
- 2.7.8. Formation of the Swarajist Party
- 2.7.9. Swarajist Politics
- 2.7.10. Gandhi's Fast and Settlement with the Swarajists
- 2.7.11 Decline of the Swarajist Party
- 2.7.12. Evaluation of the Work of the Swarajists
- 2.7.13 Summary

**2.7.1 Objectives:**

- To examine factors responsible for the formation of Swaraj party.
- To study its objectives and political activities.
- To highlight its impact on Indian politics especially on the Congress.
- To evaluate the causes of its decline.

**2.7.2. Introduction**

Gandhi's rise to leadership was made possible by the decline of Mrs. Besant and Tilak as national leaders. His first real bid to national leadership was made in response to the Rowlatt Report. On February 24, 1919, he called a meeting (at his *ashram*) of twenty selected leaders from different regions of India. Those present in the meeting drafted and signed the following *Satyagraha* pledge. "We solemnly affirm, refuse civilly to obey these laws. We further affirm we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person and property." Quoted in *The Hindu*, Madras, 27.2.1919. This was followed by many such pledges throughout India.

### 2.7.3 Gandhi and Indian Politics

In 1919 Gandhi was still a new comer to the Indian of Politics. He had returned to India from South Africa in January 1915, after many years stay in that country. On the instructions of his political teacher Gokhale, he spent his first year quietly and in observing the political scene in India. During the First World War Gandhi was adamant in his conviction that it would be wrong to embarrass the British Government. So, he supported Britain's War efforts by embarking on serious, though brief, drives to recruit Indians into the army. Although Gandhi had directed a *Satyagraha* campaign in response to the pleas of the indentured labourer of the Champaran district of Bihar in as early as 1917 and followed that with further *Satyagrahas* as in Ahmedabad and in Kheda Districts both in Gujrat, it still appeared as if Gandhi would not toe the then 'Congress' in challenging the British rule. Gandhi was by no means then regarded as the leader of the country.

In shaping and leading a mass movement, Gandhi was setting a new precedent for nationalist Politics in India. Gandhi announced a *hartal* on March 30. He and his lieutenants started publicizing and mobilizing support for the movement. The pre-existing net work of Home Rule Leagues provided Gandhi with an important organizational base for transmitting information and directives. Local leaders who were frustrated by the moderate pronouncements of Tilak and Mrs. Besant were more than willing to cooperate with Gandhi, Gandhi provided the much needed alternative to this energetic men in the Congress, for the Congress was then only a resolution issuing body without any plan for active politics. Gandhi furthered his prospects by touring the whole country. There was great response and the *hartals* on March 30 and on April 6 in some cities were widespread and successful although Calcutta and the South did not participate. In the cities of the North and the West, Gandhi had successfully relied upon local discontentment to draw various classes and communities into a popular movement. However, the Rowlatt *Satyagraha* propelled Gandhi into a position of national leadership. During the course of *Satyagraha* Gandhi had won over many prominent Indian leaders such as Moti Lal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal from the United provinces, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari from Delhi, Rajendra Prasad from Bihar and C. Rajagopalachari from Madras.

### 2.7.4. C.R. Das and the Leadership Tangle

Support to Gandhi was by no means unanimous. Pattabhi Sitaramayya openly criticised Gandhi for the *Satyagraha* and pointed out that constitutional decisions were of the utmost urgency. Throughout 1919 there was a struggle for the power among national leaders. The main challenger to Gandhi was C.R. Das of Bengal. He wanted to work within the existing Government system, to try to work the new Reforms and if necessary obstruct the legislatures from within. He felt that such a policy would lead most quickly towards the establishment of a responsible government, C.R. Das felt that scheme would prevent the

participation of other emerging social groups.

The Annual Congress Session of December, 1919 was held at Amritsar. The Amritsar Congress was "*radical*" enough to drive out a large contingent of moderates but still supported a resolution that the Congress should support the working of the Reforms so as to secure "early establishment of full responsible government" C.R. Dass and Gandhi co-sponsored the resolution in an effort to achieve a consensus between the opposing parties.

### **2.7.5. Non-Cooperation**

The resolution to give a chance to the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms became meaningless when in September, 1920 Gandhi articulated a programme of non-cooperation with the British Government. Gandhi's immediate objective was to include new groups in an expanding political arena, for example, the Muslims, the untouchables and the peasants. He attempted to appeal to Muslims with his Khilafat agitation, to the untouchables with his 'harijans' uplift programme, and to the peasants with his emphasis on village industry and hand spinning (*Charkha*) and *Khaddar* as the economic basis of society. These groups, according to Gandhi's plan could work together to create a new India.

At the annual Congress Session in Nagpur in December, 1920, C.R. Dass and his followers attempted to mount a new offense against Gandhi's programme but the lack of any clear alternative led them to capitulate and agree to support Gandhi and non-cooperators. But his temporary entente was fragile and doomed to failure.

After the Nagpur Congress of 1920, the Non-Cooperation Movement operated with full authority of the Congress. The boycott of elections had been largely successful earlier in November and many of the leaders who would have run for legislative seats instead toured their regions holding public meetings explaining the meaning of Non-Cooperation. The Movement reached the high point in 1921, with an all-India *hartal* on November 17, the day the Prince of Wales landed in Bombay for a visit to India. In Bombay the demonstrations led to violence and some fifty-three persons were killed in the subsequent riots. The Prince's tour of India sparked violent incidents most notably in Calcutta and Madras. The Government reacted with a series of imprisonments. By the time of the annual Congress Session in Ahmedabad in later December, 1921, more than 40,000 Congress workers were in jail.

The Ahmedabad Congress responding to the increasing number of arrests, made emergency plans for the continuance of Non-Cooperation and appointed "Mahatma Gandhi as the sole executive authority of the Congress with the power of appointing a successor in an emergency." The Congress also suggested the idea of a round table conference with the Government but the proposal was summarily rejected by the Viceroy. Shortly thereafter, two major 'no-tax' campaigns began to be organized, one in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh

and the other in the Surat District of Gujarat. Gandhi wrote a letter to the viceroy dated February 1, 1922, announcing his plans for the campaigns in Surat which he would personally conduct but wrote that if in seven days all political prisoners were released and if the press was freed from administrative control, the campaign would be discontinued. After seven days, however, an outbreak of mob violence in Chauri Chaura, a town in the United Provinces, resulted in the death of twenty two policemen. It caused Gandhi to reconsider his plan for mass civil disobedience. On February 12, he and the Working Committee of the Congress issued an order suspending the mass civil disobedience. This included no-tax campaign in Guntur which had been successful and conducted without violence. Gandhi had been increasingly disturbed by the violence which Non-cooperation was causing. The violence in Bombay had disturbed him but the Chauri Chaura incident, as he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru on February 19, 1922, was for him the last straw.

#### **2.7.6. Council Entry and the Congress**

The All-India Congress Committee met in Delhi on February 24 and 25, 1922 and endorsed Gandhi's earlier resolution suspending civil disobedience. Though the Committee reiterated its full faith in the idea of civil disobedience, it was decided that the atmosphere was not ripe for conducting a campaign with total non-violence. The Committee in line with Gandhi's wishes, recommended that Congress workers concentrate on the 'constructive programme'. The constructive programme involved hand spinning and the propagation of *khaddar* (hand-spun cloth) as well as activities such as prohibition and work for the uplift of the untouchables. In many ways the constructive programme resembled social reform activities of the previous century, though the emphasis was on spontaneous reforms along "national lines" rather than reformatory legislation. Gandhi was careful to delineate the programme without the westernizing connotations that had been characteristic of the nineteenth century movements. He also stressed the political nature of such activities as propagating *khaddar*, explaining that it constituted a direct attack on the economic bases of British imperialism.

Gandhi was arrested shortly thereafter on March 13, and was subsequently sentenced to a prison term of six years. He was released after only two years in prison because of serious health problems which necessitated an operation. After recovery he felt that he should honour the terms of his sentence and he wrote that he was entering a state of 'political retirement' for the remaining four years. Though this retirement meant that he was not going to lead any new campaign of civil disobedience, Gandhi's presence continued to be felt. In fact, he was still by far the most important person in national politics, and his prison term and subsequent 'constructive' activities only worked to increase his popularity.

### 2.7.7. Mahatma Gandhi in Jail

Gandhi's removal from public life in 1922 raised hopes among certain Congress workers in Madras that a programme of 'Council entry' could be adopted by the Congress. These hopes were initially frustrated by the work of C. Rajagopalachari. The Tamilnadu Congress Committee met in April, 1922, amidst cries that the recent election to the Committee had been rigged by Rajagopalachari to exclude most of his opponents, Rajagopalachari managed to win support, for Gandhi's constructive programme and for a resolution which re-affirmed the Congress stance on the boycott of the Councils. Satyamurthi and Rangaswami Iyenger vehemently opposed the resolution but were unsuccessful in their attempts to defeat it. They were particularly concerned about the issue of 'Council entry' because of the upcoming elections in 1923, Satyamurthi wrote to Jayakar, an important Congress moderate member in Bombay on July 1, 1922.

"As time passes I view the desperation to which the non-cooperators are being driven in supporting a tottering edifice, because they have not the courage to acknowledge their mistake, I am convinced that a new party of nationalists ought to be formed and the sooner the better it is."

Satyamurthi also congratulated Jayakar on having recently resumed his law practice in spite of the Congress plan and recommended that C.R. Das be approached about leading the new 'Nationalist' party. Shortly thereafter Rangaswami Iyenger, editor of the Tamil daily Swadeshamitram, also wrote to Jayakar about the necessity of forming a party specifically for the purpose of contesting the elections. He lamented that the Congress causes in Madras was in the hands of the non-cooperators, and wrote of the Justice Party as under :

"While the non-Brahman movement, which has taken the place of the 'moderates' in capturing the Legislative Council and the ministership has, through its position of patronage and influence, been trying its best to obtain a hold in the people by re-adjusting and liberalizing their programme. I have no doubt, however, that if the Congress comes round to our point of view, there will really be no opposition worth speaking of and our work will go forward easily."

Mrs. Besant realising that there was a good deal away from the extremism of Gandhi, tried to organize a conference of the nationalist in Delhi during the summer of 1922. The Conference was to be directed to the purpose of re-establishing a 'rational programme' for the Congress. Both Satyamurthi and Rangaswami Iyenger decided against attending because they thought that such a conference would increase differences within the Congress at a time when they were trying privately to persuade certain congressmen to accept the plan of 'Council entry'. One may also suspect that they resented Mrs. Besant's re-entry into Indian politics after her five years 'retirement'

On October 15, 1922, Satyamurthi wrote to Jayakar :

"I am doing my best with the aid of Mr. A Rangaswamy Iyenger to create public opinion here in favour of entering the councils. But you know how hard it is. Gandhian superstition is very hard to fight. But we know we are right."

The letter suggests that Rajagopalachari was emerging successful in his attempts to popularize Gandhi's programme and in influencing local Congress leaders. Satyamurthi went on to suggest in his letter to Jayakar that the Swarajists (those who favoured the entry to the Councils) should speak out at the forthcoming annual Congress session in December.

'Council entry' did, in fact, become the major issue of the 1922 Gaya Congress Session. C.R. Das presided over Congress and lent his support to the idea of contesting the 1923 elections and entering the Councils. He maintained that there was no opposition between the spirit of non-cooperation and the plan for 'Council entry' which was merely designed for the purpose of obstructing the Councils from within and hence making a failure of dyarchy, S. Srinivasa Iyenger who in 1921 had resigned his seat in the Madras Legislative Council to join the ranks of the non-cooperators, and reversed his position and spoke out the 'Council entry', moved an amendment that the Congress should run for the Council but then refrain from taking seats. Such a programme, he added, would at least keep the 'moderates' and the Justices out of the legislatures. One of the men who supported this amendment was Motilal Nehru, a wealthy lawyer from Allahabad who had given up his practice in 1920 to work with Gandhi. In a speech at the Congress session he said :

"The object of boycotting the Councils was rejection of the reforms and so long as the Councils continue to function, the boycott has no meaning. Since the mischief done by the Council is commonly known. The nationalists should enter the Council and exert pressure against the moderates.

But the amendment was defeated with 1740 against and 890 votes in favour. The spectre of Gandhi, to the dismay of the Swarajists continued to haunt the Congress.

With the vote against the Swarajist amendment, the Gandhian contingent led by C. Rajagopalachari asserted its control over the Congress deploring the Swarajis' tactics while the 'undisputed' leader Gandhi was still in prison. Rajagopalachari made an impassioned plea for continuing the boycott of the Councils. Rajagopalachari's position was vigorously supported by his fellow leader from Madras, Vijayaraghavachariar who had opted for the Gandhian programme after he had presided over the 1920 Nagpur Congress Session. The Congress Session in 1922 responded to their pleas reaffirmed its commitment to the ideals and practice of non-cooperation as it had been outlined by Gandhi in the previous years.

### **2.7.8. Formation of the Swarajist Party**

On January 1, 1923, the All-India Congress Committee met and Das announced his resignation from the Presidentship of the Congress. He started "I

cannot accept and cannot associate myself with most of the resolution passed in the last session of the Congress, I must therefore either retire from public or form a separate party within the Congress." Choosing the latter course, Dass shortly thereafter met Motilal Nehru, Jayakar, Ramaswami Iyenger, Satyamurthi and other Congress leaders announced the formation of the Swarajist Party for the purpose of contesting the Council elections.

On February 6, 1923, Rangaswami Iyenger announced that he was starting an English weekly in Madras to popularize the Swarajist Party, and wrote optimistically to Jayakar : "I have been talking to some of Brahman and non-Brahman members of the council likely to join our party and I hope, if not immediately, they will very soon come into it."

Satyamurthi was less sanguine. In a letter to Jayakar on March 28, he wrote : "Things are not very much better here; thanks largely to the non-Brahman movement." Satyamurthi correctly perceived the strength of the Justice Party; its success in working dyarchy and in achieving many of its goals, and in the process expanding network of patronage throughout the administrative services which made their chances for the 1923 elections very good. In the elections, the Justice Party won sixty-one seats, the Swarajist Party eleven and independents forty-four.

### **2.7.9. Swarajist Politics**

Satyamurthi was one of the eleven successful Swarajist candidates. P.T. Rajan, a prominent non-Brahman leader from Madurai, wrote about Satyamurthi's participation in the Legislative Council as under :

In 1923, Mr. Satyamurthi was elected to this Council as representative of the Madras University. I have already mentioned that members of the first Council got very happy as members of a joint family with the advent of Mr. Satyamurthi into the Council, controversy replaced harmony. Mr. Satyamurthi had utter contempt for non-Brahmans because he felt they were not clever. This contempt turned into hatred when he found that the Party was running the administration successfully. This hatred was more against the non-Brahmans in general for their support to the Party in the elections in the guise of attacking the Justice Party, Satyamurthi vented his hatred for non-Brahmans."

This contention of P.T. Rajan indicates the extent of communal tension in the political conflict. Satyamurthi, however, believed that the Justice Party was a communal and anti nationalist organization and regarded the attacks on Brahman and the collaboration with the British Government as evidence of this.

In spite of the Justice Party's continued lack of interest in the nationalist movement there were certain other non-Congress leaders in Madras who were becoming increasingly sympathetic to the demands of the Congress. V.S. Srinivasastri, who had left the Congress in 1917 due to its increasing 'radicalism', was by 1924, among those who were petitioning for 'dominion status' for India. On February 22, 1924, he cabled the British Labour Party



leader Geore Lansbury, M.P., to the effect that the need for dominion status was overwhelmingly agreed upon by the Indian leaders- moderates and liberals alike, and, that some gesture in that direction should be made by the Government. The cable read : "Some unequivocal handsome gesture of friendliness absolutely essential, present Government's attitude, far from such, almost non-possessum. I submit, respectfully, it is not yielding, to clamour or threat but wish graceful recognition of the inevitable, and vindication not only to previous Government pledges but of High minded and righteous policy characteristics of your Party."

C.P. Ramaswami Aiar another prominent Madras moderate, was also involving himself more with nationalist politics.

The early years of the decade thus were the coalescence of three desperate groups, the Swarajists, the Justicities and the Moderates. Though they all avowed different ends. In fact the Justice Party was the bitterest rival to all Swarajist Party in Madras, they all differed from Gandhi in that they opted for programmes of constitutional reforms and agitation. The pressure exerted by these groups and by the alike people was, one suspects, responsible for Gandhi's eventual compliance with 'Council entry' programme.

On February 5, 1924, Gandhi was released from the prison. The Swarajists, led by complete obedience. His method for achieving this obedience, as well as creating a spirit of harmony and unanimity, were described in an article in the *Times of India* as under:

"After the work of the Ahmedabad meeting was over, Mahatmaji called all present- members and spectators quite close. He appeared very much dejected and his voice was not quite audible. He said in Hindi, 'My heart is dejected on seeing the proceeding of the two days. I am of the opinion that our workers are unfit to win Swaraj Resolution, amendments points of order, counting of votes, asking for polls, all this manoeuvring proves out unfit for Swaraj. After referring to a point of order raised by Dr. Chaitram, Mahatmaji said, 'His question was like a wound in my heart.' Mahatmaji sat silent. He could not speak further. He was deeply affected. Tears began to flow from his eyes. His tears set Mr. Mohammed Ali crying seeing this the ladies sitting behind Mahatmaji also began to cry : and then the members' too, imitated them. Then said Mahatmaji : "I am considering what I should do next. I have a thought that I should leave the Congress and work through another body." Then Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad appealed to the members to express their confidence in Mahatmaji. Immediately one member from each province got up and expressed such a confidence. Last of all Maulana Mohammed Ali rose to speak. But not one word could be uttered. He was deeply affected and tears began to flow from his eyes. He went down on his knees before Mahatmaji. He took his cap off and placed his head on Mahatmaji's feet," Then Mahatmaji said, "I am proud to see the affection shown by you all, give me a few days to decide what should be done next" Saying so, he dissolved the meeting."

Gandhi, as a charismatic leader in the literal sense, thus turned a 'defeat' into an astounding victory.

Another example of Gandhi's demand for obedience and conformity to his plan occurred later in 1924. Upon reading a press report which described a party in which Motilal Nehru partook freely of wine, Gandhi wrote a letter to Motilal reprimanding him for not adhering to the Congress programme of temperance. Such interference in the lives of other Congress leaders was not uncommon for Gandhi, and to many people this kind of activity only confirmed their belief that he was a saint.

#### **2.7.10. Gandhi's Fast and Settlement with the Swarajists :**

In the tradition of a saintly ascetic, Gandhi's ultimate solution for the crisis was the fast. He commenced his third fast on September 17, 1924, ostensibly to present against Muslims riots at Delhi, Gulbarga, Lucknow, Allahabad and elsewhere. Shortly after the riots, he wrote in *Young India*.

"I passed two nights in restlessness and pain. I then knew the remedy.

I must do penance. My penance is the prayer of a bleeding heart for forgiveness for sins unwittingly committed."

The penance decided upon was a twenty-one day fast. It aroused widespread sympathy and admiration. It also, strangely enough made possible a settlement with the Swarajists. At a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in late November, 1924, a formal compromise was finally reached between the Non-Cooperators and the Swarajists, and Non-Cooperation as a national programme was suspended. Gandhi riding on a wave of popularity, was able to suspend his programme with little loss of face. The exchange for his compliance with the Swarajists, it was agreed to continue the unpopular clause that the Congress members submit two thousand yards of hand spun yarn each month. For Gandhi this clause was obviously of utmost symbolic and disciplinary importance but his victory' did not mark the fact that in his compromise with the Swarajists he relinquished for more than his adversaries. At the Belgaun Annual Congress Session of 1924, over which Gandhi presided, the compromise was finalised and approved by the entire body, and the Swarajists merged with the Congress.

#### **2.7.11. Decline of the Swarajists Party**

In March 1925, the All-India Congress Committee meeting passed a resolution calling upon the Swarajists to withdraw from legislatures. Led by Motilal, the Swarajists walked out of the Central Assembly and the Provincial Councils. Before staging the walk out. Motilal declared that his Party was not prepared to participate in the budget discussion as their suggestions to the people of the United Kingdom that India should be governed according to her own wishes was consigned to oblivion.

After the death of C.R. Das in June 1925, the Swarajist Party was threatened by a split in its own ranks. There was a growing feeling within the Party that its policy should be revised and brought into line with the programme of 'Responsive Cooperation' which was formulated by Tilak. But the

majority steadily pursued the old policy, meanwhile the wing of the Swarajist Party in favour of Responsive Cooperation grew in strength. On 23rd June, 1926, a meeting was held in Calcutta to organise a party within the Congress which would work this programme. By the end of July, 1925, the most influential section of the members of the Swarajist Party in the legislatures seceded from it. Lajpat Rai tendered resignation from the Swarajist Party on 24th August, 1926. At least the responsivists and independent Congressmen formed a coalition party known as the Independent Congress Party.' Their programme was based on responsive cooperation. The results of the elections of 1926 showed that the old Swarajist Party was replaced by three distinct groups namely the Swarajist, Responsivists and the communal groups among the Muslims. After this election the Swarajist Party ceased to play an effective part in Indian politics.

### **2.7.12. Evaluation of the Work of the Swarajists**

The methodology of the Swarajists was disapproved and whipped by several leaders. Congressmen like B.C. Pal and independents like Joseph Baptista expressed grave doubts in the soundness and the practicability of the Swarajist programme. Surindernath Bannerji also called it futile and meaningless. According to Zacharia, "The Swarajists were in the possession of the people who wanted to keep their cake and eat it too. They considered it necessary, in order to retain their popularity, to take extremism and yet resolved to practise easy parliamentarianism. As a consequence, the Swarajists were driven to a course of quibbling, as to when cooperation became non-cooperation. There is certainly sound logic in the criticism that there was no meaning in joining the Council of Swarajists whose purpose was merely to make its functioning impossible.

### **2.7.13 Summary**

However, it cannot be denied that the Swarajists rendered some useful service. They emerged on the political horizon at a time when an abrupt suspension of the Non- Cooperation Movement had left behind much bitterness and frustration in every heart. The activities of the Swarajist infused new hope and enthusiasm in the masses. Their fiery speeches prepared the country once again for Civil Disobedience and this enthusiasm was exhibited admirably when the movement actually started a few years later; through consistent criticism they were able to discredit the Government in the eyes of the world. By making it impossible for the ministers to work, they compelled the Government to contemplate the revision of the constitution on the Reports of the Muddiman Committee and the Simon commission. They also exploded the false claim of the Government that the administration or the country was being run by the elected representatives of the people. The successive defeat suffered by the Government also served as an eye-opener to the British

Government. The Swarajists within the legislatures drew the intelligentsia and the thinking people closer to the Congress. No student of political history can underestimate the work done by Pandit Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das. Another highlight of their work was the passing of resolution whereby they suggested the holding of a Round Table Conference to recommend a constitution for India, based on the principle of fully responsible government. It was a result of their efforts that the British Government finally agreed to dyarchy and grant full autonomy to the provinces.

**Self-Check Exercise:**

1. Swaraj Party was formed in the year..... by.....
2. C.R.Das died on.....

**Relevant Questions:**

1. What do you know about Swaraj party.
2. Discuss causes of decline of Swaraj Party.

**Keywords:** Self Rule, Dissatisfaction, Political, Legislature, Formation, Leaders, National

**Suggested Readings:**

- S. R. Bakshi, *Swaraj Party and Gandhi*, Atlantic Publishers, 1995.
- M.P. Sreekumaran Nair, *Aftermath of non-cooperation movement and the Emergence of Swaraj Party*, Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, 1991.

**Converted into Self- Learning mode by Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur.**

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**M.A. (HISTORY) PART-II  
(SEMESTER-III)****PAPER IV GROUP C, OPTION (III)****Constitutional Development and National  
Movement in India from 1858-1930**

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**LESSON NO. 2.8****Author: Dr. S. Kadhivel**

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**New Ferment in National Politics: Simon Commission****Structure of the Lesson**

- 2.8.1 Objectives
- 2.8.2. Introduction
- 2.8.3. The Simon Commission
- 2.8.4. Aims of the Simon Commission
- 2.8.5. Release of Simon Commission Report and the First Round Table Conference
- 2.8.6. Other important activities in relation to National Movement
- 2.8.7. Summary

**2.8.1. Objectives:**

- To study the objectives of Simon Commission.
- To examine the public reaction against Simon Commission.
- To evaluate the provisions of Simon Commission and its impact on national movement.

**2.8.2. Introduction**

The Reforms of 1919 did not satisfy the national aspiration of the Indians. The Indian demand for political advance gradually grew more and more persistent. A new policy was adopted by a section of the Congress under the leadership of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. They organized the Swarajist Party and contested the 1923 elections to the legislative Councils with a view to wrecking the Reforms from within by “uniform consistent and continuous obstruction.” “But in spite of some success the policy failed in its main objective. Progressive disillusionment with the slow pace and unexciting results of the work in the Councils were evidence in as early as 1926 when Motilal Nehru declared that “we have no further use for these sham institution.” One of the major reasons for the failure on the Swarajists Movement was a great disharmony existing between the Hindus and the Muslims. There was no common programme to bring them together. The transformation of Turkey into a secular state under Kamal Pasha put an end to the Khilafat movement. The spirit of frustration resulting from the suspension

of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Gandhi adversely affected the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims, communal antagonism and riots became the bane of orderly growth of nationalism.

Commencing with the Moplah rebellion in 1921-22, communal riots took place in various parts of the country though there was communal harmony during the years 1920 and 1922. By the middle of 1922, the alliance between the Hindu and Muhammadan extremists had completely broken down and the old dissensions between the two communities were now being stimulated by the proselytizing activities of some members of both the communities. The Muslim League revived the activities. Ali Brothers who at one time used to be called the two arms of Gandhi, began to preach the gospel of communalism. The wave of communal frenzy did maximum damage in Malabar where the Moplah Muslims raised Hindu homes and massacred the Hindus in cold blood in 1922.

For five years from 1922-27, the country passed through the horrible phase of Hindu-Muslim in riots. The Muhharam and Holi festivals were the usual occasions for communal bloodbaths. The Muslim League shout loudly that the Congress aimed at establishing a Hindu Raj. The Congress, however, obsessed by an uncompromising nationalist outlook; did not take adequate measures to tackle the communal problem and tried to rally the nationalists as a counterpoise to the League while on the other hand, the Muslim League played into the hands of the British Government' which encouraged rifts so as to disrupt national policy.

While the Congress was harping on idealism and the Government was fishing in troubled waters, the riots were on the increase and the Hindus, failing to get Government protection, had to make their own arrangements for protection of their lives and property from the Muslims. The result was that the Hindu Mahasabha got revived with a view of protecting the Hindu race from the attacks of the Muslim fanatics. Pandit Madan Mohan Malvia, Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Shardanand, Dr. Moonje and other stalwarts supported the cause of Hinduism. The Hindu Mahasabha started at the Hardwar Kumbh Mela in 1915 by Madan Mohan Malvia, revived its shudhi programmes and called for Hindu self-defence squads, Swami Shardananda started Shudhi movement to counteract the Tablig movement launched by Mohammed Ali. The Shudhi movement sought to bring back to the Hindu fold those who had earlier embraced Islam and Christianity. Swami ji fell a martyr to his mission. In 1925, Dr. K.B. Hedgewar founded another organisation known as Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh to foster Hinduism and to unite Hindus for the rejuvenation of India. There was an alliance of Arya Samajist reformers with Sanatan Dharma Sabha conservatives in a common Hindu-Communal front presided over by Malvia. The factor behind the growth of communalism after 1920's lies in the post 1919 political structure. The Montford reforms had broadened the franchise out preserved the separate electorates, there was,

therefore, a built in temptation for politicians working within the system to use sectional slogans and gather a following by distributing favours to their own religious, regional or caste groups. Second factor was the unemployment among the educated youth. There was a spread of education in 1920 but without corresponding growth in employment opportunities.

The first serious outbreak of a new series of riots-occured at Multan (Punjab) in September, 1922 on the occasion of the Muharram festival, and the celebrations in 1923 were marred by serious collisions of which the most formidable occurred at Saharanpur (in then United Provinces present Uttar Pradesh) were the casualties exceed 300. The year 1925 witnessed still a worse situation. There were 18 serious riots, in which 86 persons were killed and 776 wounded. The worst storm centre was Kohat in the North West frontier Province where terrible disturbances arose out of the publication of anti-Islamic poem of Hindu authorship. The riots were followed by a temporary exodus from the town of the entire Hindu population. The Kohat tragedy sent a chill of horror through out India and a conference was held at

Delhi to make peace efforts. Gandhi observed 21 days fast to protest against communal fury, and succeeded in obtaining a temporary amity between the two communities. The year 1925 witnessed comparative calm but riots re-appeared in 1926 and 1927. In 1927 alone 36 serious riots occurred and the casualty toll exceeded 1600.

### **2.8.3. The Simon Commission**

Appointment of Simon Commission: According to the Act of 1919 a statutory commission was to be appointed ten years after the introduction of the reforms to review the political situation in India. So the Commission was due to 1929. But the British Government announced the appointment of Royal Commission in 1927. It was to be headed by sir John Simon, a member of the British Conservative Party. Several reasons were advanced for setting up the commission two years earlier. The British Parliament stated that the early appointment of commission was response to the Indian demand for an early revision of the Constitution. But the Indians explained it in a different way. Their analysis was that the conservative Party which was then in power was afraid of being ousted by the Labour party in the general elections to be held in 1929. The Conservatives being unsympathetic to India's demand for responsible government did not like the issue of the revision of the Constitution to be taken up by the labour Party. They feared that the later might concede complete independence to India. Whatever the motives, the Indians were certainly not opposed to the appointment of the commission a couple of years before the scheduled date.

**2.8.4. Aims of the Simon Commission** : The task assigned to the commission was to inquire into working of the then constitution and to find out how successful or otherwise the dyarchy was working in the provinces. It was also

to report on the functioning of the representative institutions and whether it was desirable or not to give more concession for the further development of responsible government.

Sharp reaction to Simon commission : Progressive disillusionment with the slow pace, unexciting results of the work in the councils was evidenced as early as 1926. Further disappointment came in response to announcement on November 8, 1927 that a Commission, headed by Sir John Simon, would come to India to make recommendations for the next stage of reform. The Commission was regarded offensive because it included no Indian member, and many interpreted Simon's leadership as an indication of the conservative nature of future reforms. Annual Congress Session held in 1927 in Madras resolved to boycott the Commission, and in opposition to the possibility of gradual reform, the Congress, for the first time declared independence as its goal. The widespread disillusionment with gradual constitutional reform set the stage for return to the Gandhian leadership.

Nehru Report and Congress Ultimatum : The first substantial national response to a request for suggestions regarding the new constitution was authored by Motilal Nehru and presented to the Government in 1928. He outlined a Dominion Constitution with responsible governments at the centre and in the provinces and proposed a formula or reserving seats for the protection of minorities under a joint electorate. At the All Parties Conference in August, 1928, the Report was ratified but not without serious disagreement between those proposed dominion status, a moderate position, and those who advocated, complete independence. At the Annual Congress Session in Calcutta latter that year, the controversy flared up again. Gandhi engineered a compromise where by the Nehru Report was ratified on the condition that if by December 31, 1929 the Government did not accept it, the Congress would demand and agitate for complete independence. The ultimatum specifically opened up the possibility of a civil disobedience campaign to be led by Gandhi if the Government was cold in its response.

#### **2.8.5. Report of the Simon Commission**

The Commission published its Report in May, 1930. Its main recommendations, for the sake of bitter clarity, can be studied under the following headings.

**(1) Abolition of Dyarchy and the Introduction of Provincial Autonomy:** On a detailed and careful study of Indian problem, the commission concluded that the dyarchy, an experiment. In self-government, was unworkable because for certain inherent weaknesses in the scheme. It therefore, recommended the introduction of provincial autonomy. In simple words, the transference to and control of all the provincial subjects by popular ministers. It also recommended the ministers to be made responsible for the maintenance of law and order. Safeguards were no doubt necessary and for that purpose the



Governors should be armed with special powers to take over the control of entire administration of the province in case of breakdown of law or the constitution. Thus the Commission recommended the maximum of freedom to the ministers to run the administration subject to the overriding powers of the Governors and the Governor-General.

**(2) Special Power of the Governor and the Governor General:** The Commission suggested that 'the Governor-General and Governor should remain in possession of full and ample powers to ensure a thoroughly efficient administrative system and to safeguard the interests of minorities'. The Governor should also be allowed to include one or more non-elected experienced officials in his Councils of Ministers but such an official Minister should be responsible to the Legislative Council and not to the Governor or the Governor-General.

**(3) Extension of Franchise:** In the general elections held in 1926 less than 3% of the total population enjoyed the right of vote. The commission proposed the right of vote to be given to least 10 or 15% of the people. It also suggest the retention of the communal electorates and special representation of the minority communities and classes.

**(4) Irresponsible Government of the Centre:** The Commission left the Centre untouched. It considered the introduction of dyarchy at the Centre undesirable. It said that the Central executive should be absolutely free from domination by the legislature. A strong Centre was to utmost importance for a few Years. The Commission looked forward to the possibility of a Federation including the States after which the issue of a responsible Government at the Centre was to be reconsidered.

**(5) Indian's Defence:** The Commission recognised the justness of the demand of Indanisation of the many but recommended the retention of the British forces till the country was adequately equipped to defend itself. It said that the responsibility of defending the country from external attack should remain with the British Government while India should raise force sufficient enough to maintain law and order in the country.

**(6) Reconstitution of Central Legislature:** The Commission suggested the desirability of the reconstitution of the Central Legislature on federal principle, having representatives from all the provinces and those native states which consented to join the proposed federation. The method of election for both the Houses the Commission said, should be indirect.

(7) The Commission also recommended the separation of Burma from India and of Sind from Bombay. It did not consider North-West Frontier Province suitable for internal autonomy.

**(8) Enlargement of Provincial Legislatures:** The Commission recommended the enlargement of provincial legislatures. The more important provinces should have not less than 200 and not more than 250 member. There should be no official bloc. Even the nominated non-officials should not exceed

ten percent of the total membership. The Muslims in provinces where they were in minority should be given separate and adequate representation.

**(9) Home Government:** With regard to Home Government, the Commission recommended the retention of India Council to advise the Secretary of State but with reduced powers. It proposed no change in the rate of Indianisation of the services fixed on the basis of the Lee Commission Report.

**(10) New Constitution:** The Commission also proposed that the provision of appointing a Commission to review the constitutional progress after every ten years should be done away with. In its place the new constitution should be made flexible enough to admit changes whenever necessary.

### **2.8.6. Release of Simon Commission Report and the First Round Table Conference**

In July 1930, the British Government released the Simon commission Report and announced a Round Table Conference to be held in late 1930. The recommendations did not concede dominion status and hence annoyed many Congressmen, even, those who were in favour of constitutional negotiations. 'The Hindu's responded to the Report by stating:

“India reject the Simon Report because there is not a single, large fertilizing idea, one ringing word of sympathy that could call a subject nation to high endeavour, any pervading sense of equality Nothing short of Dominion States will pacify India.”

Obviously enough. The Hindu expressed a feeling of betrayal; the hope which had been engendered by Irwin's declaration of October, 1929 were profoundly disappointed. To quote The Hindu again.

“In these attempts to whittle away the meaning of the Viceregal statement of last year, the shrewd observer finds not any evidence of statemanship but evidence of Sir John Simon's dislike and hostility to Lord Irwin.

“That the disappointment reached extremes of the political spectrum is evident in S. Srinivassa's Sastri's denunciation of the Report. Speaking at Oxford, Sastri criticised what he felt was the bad faith' implicit in the Report.”

“There are some people who, on account of Mr. Sastri's well known moderate opinions have been expecting that he would give the Simon Report his blessing at all events in report. He swept the illusion away and speedily disabused their minds of this mistaken notion.”

Despite his criticism, Sastri, along with other moderate leaders such as Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar, participated in the First Round Table Conference held in November, 1930.

### **2.8.7. Other important activities in relation to National Movement**

#### **2.8.7.1. Irwin's Proclamation**

Hopes among congress were raised by a declaration of the Viceroy. Lord Irwin, on October 31, 1929, announced that British policy in India was moving

towards the establishment of a responsible government and dominion status. The working Committee for the Congress met soon thereafter and expressed its appreciation of Irwin's declaration but asked for some concrete gesture to be made to indicate the sincerity of the Government.

Irwin's statement, however, was met in England with bitter denunciation from the major political leaders. In Britain, opinion was strongly against any substantive transfer of power in India. Churchill spoke in the Parliament that :

“We ought to make it perfectly clear that we intend to remain rulers of India for a very long and indefinite period and though we welcome cooperation from loyal Indians we will have no truck with lawlessness and treason.”

After 1929, Ramsay Macdonald's labour Government was heavily dependent on the support from the Liberal's and it was in no position to make any radical concessions to India.

### **2.8.7.2. Lahore Session : Call for Complete Independence**

The hostile receptions to Irwin's declaration and the absence of any 'concrete gesture' made Indian leaders sceptical about the intentions of the government with regard to the proposed reforms. By the end of 1929, when the Indian national congress held its annual session in Lahore, it had become apparent that the Nehru Report would be rejected. The Lahore Congress, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru expressed its dissatisfaction with the prospects of constitutional negotiations and passed a resolution calling for complete independence. The resolution said, “The Congress endorses the action of the Working Committee in connection with the manifesto signed by party leaders including congressmen on the Viceregal pronouncement of 31st October relating to Dominion Status, and appreciates the efforts of the viceroy towards a settlement of the national movement of *Swaraj*. The Congress, however, having considered all that was of the opinion that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence of India.” The resolution specifically authorised the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) to embark on a programme of civil disobedience.

The Lahore Congress was a personal victory for Gandhi as the Congress body placed its confidence in his leadership and programme. In giving the A.I.C.C., (over which Gandhi had de facto control) the authority to launch and direct a programme of civil disobedience the Congress in fact gave Gandhi control over the entire nationalist movement. The decisions of Lahore Session further represented an admission of defeat by many Swarajists who had formerly put their faith in constitutional agitation.

There were some at Lahore, however who neither wish to admit defeat nor submit once again to Gandhi's leadership. Srinivasa Iyenger, a Tamil Brahmin who had been the President of the Congress in 1926 and Subhas Chandra Bose, a former followers of C.R. Das of Bengal, protested against what they felt

was Gandhian manipulation of the selection of the Working committee and during the Lahore Session they announced the formation of a new organization to be known as the Congress Democratic Party. Disappointed though they were with the slow progress in the Councils, they were not ready to submit to the whims of a Gandhian movement. Not wanting to repeat 'debacle' of 1922, they saw intensified constitutional agitation as the only viable way to enact change at that juncture.

Iyenger and Bose, considered to be on the radical fringe of the congress, were not the only leaders to express serious doubts about Gandhi's leadership. In Madras in a series of editorials. The *Hindu* called for the continuance of work on constitutional lines to achieve the progressive emancipation of India from the British rule. This opinion was forcefully expressed when eighteen Madras Congress members of the Legislative Council refused to resign their seats in accordance with the Lahore Resolution.

### **2.8.7.3. Dandi March**

The ultimatum called for the abolition of the tax on salt, and Gandhi choose it as the focus for his initial disobedience. The Salt Tax though not extremely heavy, affected All India and hit the poor hardest. Realizing this, as well as the symbolic potential of something as basic as salt, Gandhi planned a march from his Ashram in Ahmedabad to the sea coast where he and a hand-picked group of Satyagrahis would prepare contraband salt. Beginning on March 12, the march assumed the character of a pilgrimage : in every town Gandhi passed through, he held prayer meetings and Bhajans (hymns) were recited. Reaching the sea-coast at the Gujarati town of Dandi on April 4, he spent a fully day in prayers preparing for the initial act. At 5.30 on the morning on April 5 Gandhi performed what he later referred to as his *yajna* (sacrificial) by distilling a small quantity of salt from the Arabian Sea.

With the commencement of the Salt *Satyagraha* on April 6, Gandhi also initiated a National Week during which meetings were to be held throughout India explaining and popularizing the new movement. The *Hindu* reported that the National Week also saw large scale arrests primarily of local Congress leaders who were either propagating Gandhi's programme or actually involved in the marking or selling of contraband salt. By the end of the Week, around one hundred and twenty lower level leaders (for example the President of the Ahmedabad District Congress Committee) had been arrested. Gandhi, however, was left alone. *The Hindu* which had previously been only luke warm to the *Satyagraha*, reacted to the spate of arrests with bitter indignation. It wrote.

The Government of India, unable to tolerate, disorder, was manifesting an attitude as expressed in *The Daily Mirror* on April 7, 1930 : "Eventually we shall have to command or go." It had learnt from previous encounters with civil disobedience that the quickest way to defuse the situation was to the intern the middle level leaders who would be leading the local protest movement, and yet

leave Gandhi free and avoid the possibly explosive reaction which his arrest might precipitate. But the fact that newspapers such as The Hindu had virtually been converted to civil disobedience due to Government's repression.

#### **2.8.7.4. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact :**

The Working Committee of the congress denounced the conference, and Civil Disobedience continued until March 4, 1931 when Gandhi reached a compromise with the Viceroy Lord Irwin. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, it was referred to call for the discontinuance of Civil Disobedience, the release of political prisoners who had been arrested for non-violent activities recognition for the legality of picketing against foreign goods, and allowed the manufacture and sale of non-taxed salt. There was no mention, however of complete independence and no guarantee for Dominion Status. Congress leaders reacted with surprise and bitter disappointment, as they had done ten years earlier when Gandhi had arbitrarily suspended Non-Cooperation in February, 1922.

In response to widespread criticism, Gandhi attempted to clarify his intentions at a Congress Session in late March, 1931 : "There comes a stage when he (a true satyagrahi) may no longer refuse to negotiate with his opponent. His object is always to convert his opponent with love." Gandhi believed that by making known to the Government his willingness to negotiate, he would ensure a reciprocal conciliatory gesture. Hence it was with optimism that he sailed off to the Second Round Table Conference in England on August 26, 1931.

#### **2.8.7.5. Second Round Table Conference**

Gandhi had been appointed by the congress to be its sole representative. His major strength, however, lay in organizing and mobilizing mass movements where moral dictates made for clarity and surety. Subtle and tiresome constitutional discussions, subject to the king of 'parliamentary bickering' which had so grieved Gandhi several years before in a Congress Committee meeting in Ahmedabad were not his forte. Jayakar later criticised Gandhi for his role in the conference. Within a week after Gandhi return to India after the Round Table Conference, Civil Disobedience was resumed. The Congress was outlawed, and Gandhi was in prison.

#### **2.8.7.6. Separate Electorates for Minorities - The Communal Award**

One of Gandhi's major concerns at the Conference, to the dismay of many of his fellow Congress members, had been the 'peripheral' question of separate electorates for minorities. At the First Round Table Conference in 1930 the Muslim delegation had successfully pressed for separate electorates. Gandhi, in spite of the fact that he felt he represented the Muslim community better than its own delegation, consented to this probably due to the reason that the Muslim League that was growing powerful day by day backed it. But when B.R. Ambedkar proposed separate electorates for the 'depressed classes' (untouchables) at the Second Round Table conference, Gandhi dissented.

Ambedkar, an untouchable from Maharashtra, educated in England and America, had been designated to represent the depressed classes at the Conference. Following the example of the Muslim delegation he called for recognition of the depressed classes as a distinct and independent community, "Gandhi, however, treated the question of the status of the depressed classes in the same way as he had treated the non-Brahman question in Madras. He spoke strongly against the idea that the depressed classes were a separate entity in India society, and argued that separate electorates for them would seriously divide the Indian society. Sceptical about the pretensions of Ambedkar that he was representing the proper interests of the untouchables, Gandhi imputed that he was using the issue of separate electorates to mount power for himself. Ambedkar on the other hand, wrote in his paper *The Janata* in 1932 as under :

In spite on the fact that the removal of the untouchability has been included in the constructive programme of the Congress, practically nothing has been done so far by the body to achieve that object, and in our fight against untouchability most of the local Congress leaders have been our bitter opponents."

Ambedkar regarded Gandhi as an enemy of the untouchables as unscrupulous politician who would sacrifice their real interests for his grand plan of All-India Solidarity, a cover for protection of the rich classes of and the caste system.

On September 13, 1932, Gandhi announced that he would go on fast unto death from September 20 in protest against the award of separate electorates to the depressed classes. He fasted for five days causing great alarm to the whole of India. As a result a settlement was reached between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The settlement, while providing for a joint electorate, almost doubled the number for reserved seats for Harijans.

This confrontation between the two leaders, though unusual occupied nation's attention for several weeks. The way the cleavages in the Indian society were aggravated by Gandhi's leadership of the nationalist moment, was intriguing. Indeed, it was odd that Gandhi, who is remembered among most Indians most notably for his work to abolish untouchability, should be accused by its leaders as having been a serious threat to the community. As in Tamil Nado among many non-Brahmans, Gandhi's version of nationalism was anathema to certain opposed group in society which Gandhi often claimed to represent. His understanding of the nature of his own leadership and vision of a harmonious India led conflict, time and again with minority leaders who believed that his vision was merely a play for the defence of vested interests.

Gandhi's attention to the issue of untouchability not only alienated Ambedkar nor his followers but came as a serious disappointment to Congress leaders many of whom were in prison for their activities in the Civil

Disobedience Movement. His actions diverted national attention from the main political issue and Congressmen felt that the Poona Fast irreparably damaged Civil Disobedience Movement. Jawaharlal Nehru summed up the feelings of many when he wrote.

“I felt annoyed with him (Gandhi) for choosing a side issue for his final sacrifice. What would be the result on our freedom movement? Would not the large fade into the background for the time being at least? And, if he attained his immediate object and got a joint electorate for the depressed classes, would not that result in a reaction and a feeling that something had been achieved and nothing more need be done for a while? And was not his action a recognition, and in part an acceptance of the Communal Award and the general scheme of things as sponsored by the Government? Was this consistent with non-cooperation and civil disobedience? After so much sacrifice and brave endeavour was our movement to tail off into something insignificant? I felt angry with him at the religious and sentiment approach to a political question and his frequent references in God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set.”

Nehru's statement highlighted two major problems affecting the nationalist movement. First, the struggle between social reform and political agitation, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century had been revived by Gandhi's leadership and second, the new 'secular' sometimes socialist, way of viewing India and her political struggle contrasted sharply with the vocabulary and vision of Gandhi and the Hindu Renaissance leaders such as Nehru thought the social reform was a worthy cause but that it could not be properly effected until independence was achieved and further that it was detrimental to the independence struggle because it was an internal problem. Aware of the potential divisiveness of the 'internal problems,' Nehru was afraid that Gandhi's Hindu-religious vocabulary could only work to accentuate communal cleavages.

#### **2.8.7.7. Nehru and Social Problems**

In the thirties Nehru was increasingly dealing with problems of social reform and at the same time with a more important one, namely of India's political and ideological future under the conceptual framework of 'socialism', a particularly amorphous concept in Indian intellectual and political history. It meant anything from Gandhi's humanitarian usage which included his theories of village industries, trusteeship, and government decentralization, to the radical communism of M.N. Roy, the Indian representative in the Comintern. Nehru, who attempted to bridge Roy and Gandhi used the term with a marked degree of imprecision. In a letter to Subhas Chandra Bose he tried to explain his understanding of socialism, and his own position with regard to it as under :

“Am I socialist or an individualist? Is there a necessary contradiction in

the two terms? I suppose I am temperamentally and by training an individualist and intellectually a socialist, I hope that socialism does not kill or suppress? It will release innumerable individuals from economic and cultural bondage.”

In spite of the vagueness with which Nehru spoke of socialism, he was none the less considered by many to be the mentor of the socialist movement, even without being a member of the Congress Socialist Party which was founded in 1934. In 1936 Nehru's inclusion of three prominent socialists in the Working Committee of the Congress precipitated a major crisis in Congress ranks which was only resolved when Gandhi managed to arbitrate a settlement among the various factions.

Nehru's fears that the Poona Fast would lead to the end of Civil disobedience were matched by the relief of the Government which also viewed Gandhi's new activities in a favourable light. On November 9, 1932, the new Viceroy Lord Willington, telegraphed to the 'Secretary of State'.

"It seems clear that Gandhi himself intends to concentrate all his actions and activities on the untouchable problem and the question of this making any advance in connection with civil disobedience will presumably recede into background. This development suits us and I would certainly do nothing to disturb it."

#### **2.8.7.8. Gandhi's retirement from politics**

Indeed after Poona Fast in September, 1932, Gandhi took little part in the nationalist movement in so far as it pressed for independence without concerning itself with such social problems as untouchability and the economic plight of the villages. In July, 1933, Gandhi called a halt to Civil Disobedience, allowing only individual acts of disobedience and by April, 1934, even that was discontinued. A programme of council entry' and constructive activities was decided upon by the Congress and in October, 1934 Gandhi resigned from the Congress altogether.

Gandhi's retirement from the political sphere in 1934 was the culmination of his growing feeling to the urgency and priority of social reforms. He move from the Ashram at Ahmedabad to a small village Segeon, in the jungles of Central India. There he carried on *harijan* uplift programme and formed the All-India Village Industries Association.

#### **2.8.8. Summary**

Mahatma Gandhi's resignation from the Congress, however, did not presage an end to the Gandhian influence on Congress politics. In fact, Gandhi's hand in politics was in many ways more visible than it had been in the twenties. In 1936, for example, he was Gandhi who succeeded in solving the Congress crisis precipitated by Nehru's packing of its Working Committee with socialists and in 1939, Gandhi was singlehandedly responsible for denying the Congress Presidency to Subhas Chandra Bose for the second year in a row.



**Self- Check Exercise:**

1. Poona Pact held between....
2. What was the purpose of Simon Commission?
3. What do you know about the recommendations of Simon Commission?
4. Who was Lala Lajpat Rai?
5. Simon Commission came to India in.....

**Relevant Questions:**

1. Write an essay on Simon Commission.
2. Write short note on Dandi March.
3. What do you know about Gandhi-Irwin pact.

**Keywords:** Punishment, Procession, Award, Constitutional, Provisions, Schedule, Communal

**Suggested Readings:**

1. A.B. Keith : A Constitutional History of India.
2. M.N. Pylee : Constitutional Movement in India.

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**M.A. (HISTORY) PART-II  
(SEMESTER-III)****PAPER- IV  
GROUP C, OPTION (iii)****Constitutional Development and National Movement in India 1858–1930**

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**LESSON NO. 2.9****Author Dr. B.L. Grover**

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**Dyarchy under the Act of 1919(Its Features and Criticism)****Structure of the Lesson**

- 2.9.1 Objectives
- 2.9.2. Introduction
- 2.9.3. Dyarchy under the Act of 1919- Main Features
- 2.9.4. Working of the Dyrachy
- 2.9.5. Review (Criticism)
- 2.9.6. Other Factors
- 2.9.7. Summary

**2.9.1. Objectives:**

- To discuss the factors responsible for the establishment of the dyarchy.
- To examine its main provisions.
- To critically examine the various imperfections of Dyrachy.

**2.9.2 Introduction**

The final goal of British Policy in India, as visualised by British Parliament was the progressive realization of responsible government and a gradual development of Parliamentary institutions. It was pledged not to permit the Indian constitutional structure to remain entirely bureaucratic and uncontrolled by the Indian people. But at the same time, British Government was also determined not to allow a sudden transformation of the Indian polity into a full-fledged democracy. The Parliament tried to find a way out of the two impossible situations. The introduction of Dyarchy in the Provinces under the Government of India Act 1919 was a step in that direction.

The mechanism of responsible government is based on complete subordination of the executive of the legislature. It is brought to the office and maintained in authority only as long as it retains the confidence to the legislature. The legislature which thus controls the executive, as elected by the widest possible franchise. The Government of India Act of 1919 contemplated a gradual evolution towards the final goals and not an immediate establishment or Dyarchy was devised. The Diarchy plan was based on certain spheres of Central and Provincial Governments were demarcated and separated from each

other. They were recognised as two distinct entities, each having its own responsibility. Secondly, the Control of the Central Government over the Provincial Governments was not altogether abandoned out considerably released. The Provincial authorities were given a good deal of freedom in the management initiated in the Provincial domain. The Provinces were made centers of the new political experiment called Dyarchy. The scheme was actually inaugurated in 1921 and it remained in force for sixteen years i.e. till 1937.

### **2.9.3. Dyarchy under the Act of 1919 Main Features of the System**

**2.9.3.1. Standardisation of the Provinces:** As a preliminary to the transfer of more powers to the Provinces under the Act, it was thought desirable to standardize the Provinces themselves. Hitherto there had been three categories of Provinces, placed under Governors, Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Commissioners. The Chief Commissioners were at the head of relatively small and less important Provinces. The Lieutenant-Governors were in charge of extensive areas. Under the new scheme, they were upgraded and placed at par with the Governor's Provinces. However, the Governors of Madras, Bombay and Bengal Presidencies enjoyed certain privileges which were not given to the Governors of newly created or upgraded Provinces. But, all the same, the standardization was real.

**2.9.3.2. Division of subjects :** The central theme of the Reforms was to make a beginning towards Provincial Autonomy in India. This implied freedom of control from above and also in a sense transfer of power to the Provinces. The extent of independent powers conferred upon the Provinces can be divided into some broad areas, namely, Finance, Legislation and Administration. These were carefully defined in what were called Devolution Rules in the Reforms Scheme. These rules distinguished between the spheres of Central and Provincial Governments. In practice, this means a classification of the functions of the government of 'Central and Provincial. Subjects of all India importance were categorized as Central.<sup>1</sup> Subjects of predominantly local interests were placed in the Provincial List<sup>2</sup>.

However, the division was not as rigid as it would be under a federal constitution. Moreover, the Central Legislature was not precluded from dealing with the Provincial subjects.

### **2.9.3.3. Provincial Executive**

**Demarcation of the Spheres :** The new Provincial structure was designed to meet two conditions responsibility to popular representatives, and the so called

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<sup>1</sup> Central Subjects were military matters, foreign affairs, relations with native states tariffs and customs, railways, posts and telegraph, income tax, currency, coinage, public debt, commerce and shipping and civil and criminal law.

<sup>2</sup> More important Provincial Subjects were local-self Government, medical administration and public health, education (excepting of Europeans and Anglo- Indians, and Central Universities), public works and irrigation, land revenue, administration, famine relief, agriculture, forests and law and order.

political backwardness and inexperience of the leaders. These are patently of conflicting nature. And yet they were provided for in the device of Dyarchy. The functions of the Provincial Government were divided between those which were to be given to popular control and those which were to continue to remain in official hands. The former were called Transferred Subjects and the latter Reserved Subjects. The Governor-in-Council was incharge of the Reserved Subjects, and Governor acting with ministers, was the incharge of the Transferred Subjects.

Departments, which offered most opportunities of local interest, social service and development and in which even serious mistake could be remedied were included in the list of Transferred Subjects<sup>3</sup>. But Departments concerned with law and order, land revenue or tenants, irrigation, forests and famine relief etc. were not to be transferred. Any dispute about the jurisdiction between them or any other matter of conflict was to be decided by the Governor. His decision in such matters was to be final.

**2.9.3.4. The Governor :** The Governor was the head of the Province and played a dominant part in the working of the Provincial Government. He was invested with powers. He presided over the Executive Council, held counsel with ministers, distributed portfolios among Executive Councillors and the ministers and made rules for the transaction of their business. In exceptional cases he was empowered to override the Executive Council. Even in a sphere that was supposed to have been transferred to responsible ministers, the Governor actively participated in the conduct of business. He could interfere with ministerial decisions as well. The Governor was invested with legislative powers. All the laws passed by the Provincial Legislature required his assent, and in some cases his previous sanction was required even for the introduction of a bill. If the Legislature did not pass a bill which was deemed essential by the Governor, he could certify it into an Act, in teeth of the opposition of the legislature.

The Governor's position was further strengthened by the peculiar ties of the Dyarchy. His role as a link between the two-halves of the Executive was not only pivotal but also complex. He was to lead two wings of the Government which operated in two distinct, separate fields and were responsible to two masters. He had to maintain balance between the two warring elements and save the innovation of Dyarchy from being destroyed on the rock of differences and disputes. He was obliged not only to yoke the Councillors and the Ministers to the chariot of Provincial Administration, but to drive it also. The Governor was also vested with certain emergency powers. On occasions of complete deadlock in Budget meetings, the Governor was authorised to make

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<sup>3</sup> Transferred Subjects. These included local self-Government, medical administration, public health and sanitation, education (other than of Europeans and Anglo-Indians, and Central Universities), agriculture veterinary department, co-operative societies, excise, registration, religious and charitable endowments, and development of industries.

allotment of funds in his discretion to the departments of the two-halves. Similarly, if the majority party in the legislature refused to accept office and also prevented others from accepting it by refusing to vote their Salaries, the Governor was empowered to take over the Transferred Subjects in his own charge and make arrangement for their administration. The Governors of Bengal and the Central Provinces did make use of the emergency powers.

**2.9.3.5. The Executive Council:** After the introduction of Montford Reforms, the differences existing in the status of the different Provinces disappeared. All Provinces were declared to be Governor's Provinces, with an Executive Council in each of them assist the Governor. The Reserved Subjects were entrusted to the care of the Executive Council. This body was neither responsible to the Provincial Legislature nor removable by it. In practice the Provinces of Bengal, Bombay and Madras had four Executive Councillors. Bihar and Orissa had three and the remaining Provinces had only two each. The tenure of office was five years. The Councillors worked on the portfolio system. Their salaries were subject to the vote of the legislature.

Though the Executive Council was not responsible to the Legislature, the latter had some ways and means to exercise some control over it. Money required for the Department managed by them was provided by Provincial Legislature so far as votable items of the budget were concerned. All laws pertaining to Reserved Subjects were also passed by the Legislative Councils. Thus, in practice, though not in theory, an attempt had to be made to accommodate the action of this portion of the Provincial executive to the will of the elected representatives of the people.

**2.9.3.6. The Ministers:** Provision was made in the Act to afford a measure of responsible Government by appointing ministers who were to guide the Governor in the administration of the Transferred Subjects and the Governor was to Act on the advice of his ministers in the administration of these Subjects. In case he had sufficient cause to dissent from their advice, he could take action in his own discretion. There was no statutory limit to the number of ministers. The Montague-Chelmsford Report had proposed that every Governor should have one or more ministers but the joint Parliamentary Committee recommended that there should be at least two ministers in every Governor's province. In actual practice there were three ministers in each of the three Presidencies, the United Provinces and the Punjab and two in each of the remaining four provinces. Only elected members of the Provincial Legislative Council could be ministers. Every minister was appointed by the Governor and held office during his pleasure or till he enjoyed the confidence of the Legislature.

The salary of ministers was voted by the Legislature. Originally by the Act of 1919, same salary was provided for both the ministers and the members of the Executive Council. But the Legislature was empowered to reduce the salary of ministers. The legislatures took measures in the direction in several Provinces.

It is significant to note that the Montford Reforms made no Provisions for the joint or cabinet meetings of the ministers. The Instrument of instructions issued to the Governors did not require them to consult the ministers collectively or to convene cabinet meetings of the ministers. Ministers were not, therefore, fortified by the strength of closely organised unit. The Governor dealt with each minister as an individual head of a Department. They, in spite of their plural number, did not form ministries. In fact ministers lack even that degree of corporate character, which was associated with the Executive Councils. It is, however, interesting to note that some ministers voluntarily decided to abide by the principle of joint responsibility and when time came they acted upon that self-imposed obligation.

**2.9.3.7. Position of the Services :** The position of the services presented an interesting problem under the Act. The appointments, salaries, dismissals and pensions of the Imperial Services were to be controlled as before by the Secretary of State for India. The Act of 1919 specially charged the Governor to safeguard all the members of the Services in the legitimate exercise of their functions and the enjoyment of all recognised rights and privileges. This clause was in practice interpreted broadly to mean the Control of the Governor in everything relating to the Services—their appointments, postings and promotions—even though they were posted in Transferred Department. The Ministers could not exercise complete control over their subordinates much less punish them for neglect of duty. This was of course an embarrassing position. Thus the policies of Ministers were not being carried out loyally.

**2.9.3.8. Provincial Legislatures :** Under the Minto-Morley Reforms the principle of association of the people in Provincial Government was practiced. The experience of ten years paved the way for the introduction of this new principle of responsible government, however rudimentary, in the Montford Reforms. The Legislative Councils, therefore, had to be reformed in their composition and function, in conformity with that principle. The Montford Report did not prescribe the exact composition of the Legislative Councils. It was left to the Franchise Committee, which visited India under the Presidentship of Lord Southborough. The Committee specified minimum number of the Councils. The minimum was of course substantially bigger than the maximum under the Act of 1909. As against a maximum of 50 in major provinces under the Act of 1909 the new Councils had a minimum of over 100. In most cases, the reconstituted Councils had more members than the prescribed minimum.

In new Councils at least seventy percent of the members were to be elected and not more than twenty percent could be officials. The Governor's power to nominate non-officials was thus restricted to ten percent. Territorial constituencies were considered unsuitable to Indian conditions. Hence, the constituencies were designed to represent particular communities or special interests such as Universities, Landholders, Chambers of Commerce etc.

Communal representation became an integral part of the Indian political system. The system of election recommended by the Montford Report was a system. The system of election recommended by the Montford Report was a direct one. Therefore, the Legislative Councils set up under the Act of 1919, consisted of members directly elected by the electorate. The normal qualifications for a voter were residence within the constituency and payment of a small amount by way of land revenue, rent or local rates in rural areas and municipal rates in urban areas, or income tax or some other tax or receipt of military pension. Consequently, as could be expected in an impoverished a country as India was the number of eligible voters turned out to be very small because of the above qualifications.

The tenure of the Legislative Councils was fixed at three years. But the Governor had the power to dissolve it earlier, and a new Council was to be elected within six months of its dissolution. The tenure of the Council could be extended also by one year in special circumstances.

**2.9.3.9. Functions of the Legislative Council :** The Provincial Legislative Council was given powers to make laws for peace and good Government. But this power was restricted in a number of ways; firstly, the devolution rules required the prior sanction of the Governor-General in several cases. Secondly, the Governor was given the power of certifying legislation on Reserved Subjects despite its rejection by the Legislative Council. Thirdly, he could at any stage stop the consideration of a bill on the ground that it affected the peace and tranquility of the Province. Lastly, he as well as the Governor-General could vote any bill passed by the Legislative Council. These apart, the Crown had the power of disallowing any Act of Provincial Legislature. These were serious limitations on the legislative powers of the Provincial Legislature.

The Act provided that where a Provincial Legislative Council refused leave to introduce a bill on a Reserved Subject or failed to pass it in the form recommended by the Governor, he could certify that the passage of the bill was essential for the discharge of his responsibility. Thereupon the bill became an Act. However, the signing by His Majesty through the Governor-General was essential for such an Act.

The financial powers of the Legislative Councils were also equally limited the Act provided that the estimated expenditure and revenue of the Province should be placed before the Council every year in the form of demand for grants. The Councils could assent or refuse to assent to a demand to reduce its amount. But these powers of the Council were restricted since the Governor had the powers to authorise such expenditure as might in his opinion be necessary for the safety or tranquility of the council by certifying it as essential to the discharge of his responsibility regarding the subject involved.

The Council had certain deliberative and also of interpellation. The members could ask questions and supplement on a variety of Subjects. They

could also move adjournment motions for drawing Government's attention to matters of urgent public interest. Thus the Legislative Councils, for the first time were recognised as a separate organ of the Provincial Governments. A large majority of the elected non-official members was provided in their structure. Though the official and nominated non-official element was not completely removed but numerically they were reduced to minority. Thus, the interests of a large number of Indians were to be raised in the political affairs of the country. The Franchise was also liberalized considerably.

The powers of the Legislative Councils were also enhanced. Though these powers were restricted by the special powers of the Governor with regard to both Legislation and the Budget, yet the influence of the Legislature upon the executive was noticeable because persistent defiance of the opinion of the legislature by the Executive could have been stigmatized as autocratic rule. It would have proved fatal to the smooth working of the constitution. In addition to their powers of legislation and voting on a part of the Budget legislator's right to ask questions, move resolutions and adjournments, were also quite important powers of the Legislative Councils and their constant use was bound to prove beneficial and salutary.

**2.9.4. Working of the Dyarchy:** Dyarchy was introduced in eight Provinces, namely Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Madras, Assam, Bombay, United Provinces and the Punjab in 1921, and in 1932 in the North West Frontier Provinces. From the very beginning, it had to face opposition from the most important political party of the time, the Indian National Congress. The Swarajists (of course with the approval of the Congress) contested 1923 Elections, firmly determined to wreck the constitution from within, rather than to work it to success. Hence the constitutional machinery of the Government broke down in C.P. and Bengal during 1924-26 and 1924-27 respectively. In 1929, for a few months its smooth functioning was again disrupted. In the rest of the Provinces deadlocks between the Governors and the ministers were very frequent. All these exposed the inherent defects of Dyarchy which was doomed to extinction.

**2.9.5. Review (Criticism):** The whole project of Diarchy could not satisfy the Indians. The hybrid structure, with all its imperfections and inadequacies, evoked severe criticism. Even the official Committee handed by Sir Alexander Muddiman, who thoroughly examined its working came to the conclusion that the Dyarchy had failed. This conclusion was common to both, the Majority and Minority Riots. Even those, who had worked under the scheme, also wanted it to go as quickly as possible. Sir P.C. Mitter (Bengal) said, "Soon after joining government, realized that the system was unsatisfactory and unworkable". Ministers of Bihar and Orissa of the opinion that "Dyarchy was doomed, and it was not possible to work it successfully. In a joint statement the Executive Councillors and Ministers of Bombay observed: "The main object of reforms point of view, but this purpose was not achieved". The scheme had many



inherent defects and some outside factors also contributed to its failure. Let us take them one by one.

**2.9.5.1. Not based on sound Principles :** The division of Government into two watertight compartments reflected the inherent defects of Dyarchy. The organic structure of the state could not be divided into two rigid compartments, namely, Reserved and Transferred Subjects. Such a division was contrary to all principles of political theory and practice. When it was put to practice, it proved unworkable. Both the majority and the minority Reports of the Muddiman Committee concluded that a perfect differentiation between Transferred and Reserved Subjects was impossible. A similar opinion was endorsed by the Bombay Government and other former minister who had occasion to work out the reforms under Dyarchy. Again, want to clear demarcation of subjects between the two-halves enhanced possibility of undue interference in each other's sphere. Whenever such a conflict arose the Government acted as an arbitrator and generally sided with the reserved half.

**2.9.5.2. Illogical Division of Subject:** The illogical and unscientific division of the Provincial Subjects further added to the inefficiency of the administration. No minister was allowed a complete control of his department. Education being a transferred Subject was placed in the charge of a Minister, but European and Anglo-Indian education was kept under a Councillor as a Reserved Subject. The anomaly created by such a faulty division of subjects was explained by Sir K.V. Reddy a minister of Madras "I was a Minister for Development without forests, I was Minister for Agriculture minus irrigation. As Agriculture Minister, I had nothing to do with Madras Agriculturists Loans Act and Madras Land Improvements Loans Act. The efficacy and efficiency of a Minister for Agriculture, without having anything to do with irrigation agricultural loans, land improvement loans and famine relief etc. may better be imagined than described. Then again, I was Minister for Industries but had not power over factories, boilers, electricity and waterpower, mines or labour—all of which are Reserved Subjects. The faulty working of the system is again well illustrated by C.Y. Chintamani who was a minister in V.P. He observes that after an enquiry on fragmentation of land in 1921, the Department of Agriculture reported in 1922 that the question should have been dealt by Revenue Department. Thus, the illogical division of subjects considerably handicapped the ministers in effective work in their own Department. Lack of control over the finance added further to their difficulty.

**2.9.5.3. Governor's Autocratic Powers :** Governor's power in the distribution of Subjects were absolute. Further, he appointed ministers in his discretion, consulted them individually looked upon them as mere advisers and dismissed them at will. This placed the ministers under an official tutelage and domination of the Governor. Subsequent to practice of elevating ministers to the position of Executive Councillor sank the level of glorified secretaries. Moreover, the Reforms gave the Governors more autocratic powers than before. In addition to powers vested in them by the Act, a clever framing of the rules by

an I.C.S. in violation of the spirit of the Act, made him more powerful. And the Governors were not chary in making full use of these powers by interfering in the working of the ministers. Apart from illegitimate interference by the Governor, it is difficult to maintain that the Act really provided for Ministers responsibility which regard to Transferred Subjects. Such responsibility means that a minister must secure the approval of the people through the Legislative Councils for his deeds. But with the help of the official bloc, he could ignore the elected majority. This struck at the very root of ministerial responsibility. The Governor did not act as a constitutional head in respect of the Transferred Subjects.

**2.9.5.4. No Joint Deliberations :** Joint deliberations on matters of policy and administration is an obligatory part of a responsible government. Section 52 (3) of the Act laid down that “in relation of Transferred Subject the Governor shall be guided by the advice of his ministers unless he sees sufficient cause to dissent the Act laid down that “in relation of Transferred Subject the Governor shall be guided by the advice of his ministers unless he sees sufficient cause to dissent from their opinion.” This clearly implied a consultation with the whole body of ministers. The Joint Parliamentary Committee also desired it. Put under the rules prepared by I.C.S. incumbents, the Governor could violate this section both in matter and spirit. As a general rule he consulted the minister individually. The initiative for joint consultation rested with the Governor. Only a few Governors encouraged it. The majority of the Muddiman Committee wanted this to be accepted as a principle in order to move the embryonic beginning of the cabinet system. But the minority thought that even if this were adopted as a principle it would not remove the inherent defects of Dyarchy, most important of them being the division of Government.

**2.9.5.5. Lack of Joint Responsibility :** The principle of joint responsibility was neither provided nor was it possible to secure it under the system. The ministers were not selected on the basis of organised parties; in the Legislature, but on individual basis. There was also no office of the Chief Minister. They were, therefore, not fortified by the strength of closely organised unity. The Governor dealt with a minister as an individual head of a Department. Thus ministers did not come together into office, nor did go out of office together. In the absence of joint responsibility, it was the object of many ministers to hold on to their positions by hook or by crook. It degenerated the ministers and weakened the authority of the Legislature over them. Such ministers were also shielded by the Government against the elected representatives. In a vote of censure moved against a minister of the Madras Council in 1927 a clear majority of elected members voted against him but with the ‘support of the Government block and the whip to its supporters, the motion was defeated and the minister continued Responsibility to the Legislature thus tended to be defeated into subservience to an irremovable Executive. The Raja of Panagal, a minister of Madras for successive two terms

openly confessed this bare fact when he said, "he was responsible only to the Governor." It clearly shows that the Parliamentary responsibility of ministers was nothing but a make-believe and sham.

**2.9.5.6. Peculiar Composition of Legislative Councils:** The peculiar composition of the Legislative Councils contributed most to the failure of Dyarchy. The nasty principle of the representative of communities, classes and interests were continued under Dyarchy. It divided the Legislative Councils into small factional groups. The prominent and disciplined groups in the Provincial Councils were those of the Swarajists and the officials. The Swarajist, unfortunately, believed in policy of obstruction and were bent upon wrecking the Legislatures from within. This attitude of the Swarajists enhanced the importance of the nominated block which was another well-organised group in the Legislative Councils. This strengthened the position of the Provincial Government who had always at their command the votes of the official, nominated non-official European members Anglo-Indians and landholders. The Government could afford to ignore the elected representatives with the help of these groups rejection of the Censure Resolution of the Madras Legislative Council in 1927, as already mentioned established this fact beyond any doubt.

**2.9.5.7. Excessive Control of the Finance Department:** The popular position of the Finance Department was also one of the potent causes of the failure of Dyarchy. Control exercised by the Finance Department over the Transferred Subjects was excessive. Firstly the Finance Department was always under the charge of an Executive Councillor, mostly from the I.C.S. cadre also had under him some of the spending departments. This naturally led to the suspicion than an unconscious desire to promote the interest of the departments would tell upon the claims of other departments, particularly the nation building ones; secondly the Finance Department, which should have advised only on the financial aspects of the administrative proposals, often crossed its frontiers and tried no control the policy of the ministers. The evidence of almost all the ministers revealed that the Finance Department examined not only the financial aspect of their proposals but the policy of the proposals and its bearing upon the administration. This was irksome and sometimes even mischievous. The minister could not reject with impunity, the device given by the Finance department, for it could withhold funds. Lastly the minister held the charge of comparatively less important subjects. Seldom were their requests for adequate funds for new schemes acceded to by the Finance Department.

**2.9.5.8. Irresponsible Civil Servants:** Perhaps the most unwholesome feature of Dyarchy was the position of permanent Services (I.C.S.) vis-a-vis Ministers. The ministers could implement their policies only through the services. To do this effectively, they depended on the dutiful support and co-operation of the services. But either they did not get the same at all, or at least no to the desired degree. The civil servants were not under the control of the ministers.

The instrument of Instructions issued to the Governor changed them with duty of safeguarding all the members of the Services in plain words, all matter relating to Services—such as promotions, transfers, etc. were under the Control of the Governors. As such, the top layer of the Civil Services was not responsible to the ministers. The ministers were powerless, as they could not punish the Civil Servants for government duty. Therefore the I.C.S. not only ignored but also humiliated the ministers with insubordination and even defiance.

The Departmental Secretariat and Heads of the Departments having direct access to the Governor, further undermined the position and responsibility of the minister. It reinforced the suspicion of the ministers that the civil servants were influencing the Governors behind their back and without the knowledge of the ministers. Moreover, this privilege made the Services feel that they could altogether ignore the ministers. The Minority Report of the Muddiman Committee also pointed out that friction between them was bound to arise in the altered circumstances the control of the Services by the Governors was incompatible with the new democratic situation. As long as the old basis of relations between the Services and the Ministers was not altered in response to the altered situation, the existing state of affairs was bound to prove an embarrassing anachronism. It could not be expected to bring harmony and cordiality among the Ministers and the Services.

**2.9.6. Other Factors :** There is no denying the fact that the breakdown of Dyarchy was mainly due to its inherent defects, yet certain other factors made significant contribution to its miserable failure. In 1920, the failure of monsoons brought about catastrophic result. There was scarcity of food-grains and people suffered miserably. The Meston Award which demanded substantial contribution to the Government of India from the Provinces further worsened the situation. Under these circumstances the experiment of Dyarchy in Provinces, which largely depended the affluent finances, was bound to fail. Besides, the political climate of the country also contributed to its dismal failures in the provinces. The Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy, the Khilafat Movement doubling of Salt Tax in 1923, disposition of the Maharaja of Nabha due to his nationalistic views and the continued operation of some nasty acts, caused distrust, discontent and dissatisfaction among the Indians. They were therefore, in no mood to accept reforms coming from the British quarters, the Non-co-operation agitations of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, and the Swarajists policy of obstruction from within the Legislatures contributes to the failure of Dyarchy in no small degree. All these factors led to the complete breakdown of Dyarchy. It becomes so unpopular that it was treated almost as an abuse by the Indians Sir H. Butler observes. "In India it has almost become a term of abuse. I have heard one man shouting to another "You are a Dyarchy. I will beat you with a Dyarchy."

### **2.9.7. Summary**

Thus, Dyarchy failed. Even its staunchest supporters found it

uninspiring as soon as they were associated with its operation. To the people of India, it became clear that it would not satisfy this half-way house between autocracy and responsible government. When Lord Oliver, the Secretary of State for India in the first Labour Government, compared the Act to a sea-worthy vessel and observed that it should carry Indians across it, only would get into a row. Pandit Moti Lal Nehru replied, "It may be sea-worthy but what we want is not only a sea-worthy vessel but a vessel big enough for our cargo, big enough to accommodate the millions of passengers that have to cross over from servility to freedom. When put to test, it was found that the Act had nothing to offer by way of substantial transfer of power to the representatives of the people. Even optimist Moderates also known as the Indian Liberals, who gave it a fair trial found the Reforms wanting in many respects and were therefore terribly disappointed. The result was the emergence of a new spirit, a new unity and a new movement on the Indian National scene".

But we should remember that Dyarchy was never intended to be a Parliament. It was not prescribed as the final form of the Indian Government. Lord Montague had made it clear that the reforms proposed by him were in the nature of a stepping-stone in the direction of complete self-governing India. Even though Dyarchy was transitory machinery for constitutional changes, yet it was too inadequate and was foisted for too long.

**Self Check exercise:**

- Dyarchy was introduced in eight Provinces, namely Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Madras,.....,.....and the Punjab in 1921, and in ..... in the North West Frontier Provinces.

**Relevant Questions:**

1. Write an essay on the main features of Dyarchy established under the act of 1919.
2. Who abolished the Dyarchy system?
3. What were the principles of Dyarchy?
4. Critically examine the theory and practice of Dyarchy under the Act of 1919?

**Keywords:** Autocracy, Responsible, Power, Rule, Amendment, Abuse

**Suggested Readings:**

1. A.B. Keith : A Constitutional History of India.
2. M.N. Pylee : Constitutional Movement in India.
3. R.C. Majumdar : Struggle for Freedom.

**Converted into Self Learning Mode by Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur.**

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