



# Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement

## Introduction

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

## Khilafat (Caliphate) Issue

- **Turkey's Alliance against British:** The Muslims all over the world, including India, regarded the sultan of Turkey as their spiritual leader, Khalifa (Caliph).
  - During the First World War, Turkey had allied with Germany and Austria against the British.
- **Discontented Indian Muslims:** The Indian Muslims supported the government during the First World War with an understanding that the sacred places of Ottoman Empire would be in the hands of Khalifa.
  - However, after the War, the **Ottoman Empire was divided, Turkey was dismembered and the Khalifa was removed from power**.
  - This angered the Muslims who took it as an insult to the Khalifa. The Ali brothers, **Shoukat Ali and Mohammad Ali** started the Khilafat Movement against the British government.
    - This movement took place between 1919 and 1924.
- **Khilafat Committee:** In early 1919, the **All India Khilafat Committee** was formed under the leadership of the **Ali brothers, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Ajmal Khan and Hasrat Mohani**, to force the British Government to change its attitude to Turkey.

- Thus, the grounds for a country-wide agitation was prepared.
- An **All India Khilafat Conference** was held in Delhi in November 1919 and the call was made to boycott the British goods.
- **Demands of Indian Muslims:** In India, the Muslims demanded from the British that:
  - The Khalifa's control over Muslim sacred places should be retained.
  - The Khalifa should be left with sufficient territories after territorial arrangements.
- **Congress' Initial Stand:** The support of the Congress was essential for the Khilafat movement to succeed.
  - Although **Mahatma Gandhi** was in favour of launching Satyagraha and non-cooperation against the Government on the Khilafat issue, the **Congress was not united on this form of political action.**
  - The Congress, later, felt inclined to provide its support as it was a **golden opportunity to unite the Hindus and Muslims** and to bring Muslim participation in such mass movements.
  - The Muslim League also decided to give full support to the Congress and its agitation on political questions.

## The Non-Cooperation Khilafat Movement

- **Role of Mahatma Gandhi:**
  - **Beginning of the Gandhian Movements:** The Non-Cooperation Movement was the beginning of the Gandhian Movement against the British.
    - Mahatma Gandhi returned to India in 1915 and started organising peasants and labourers protests, such as those in **Kheda, Champaran** and **Ahmedabad**, against the atrocities that were being inflicted upon them.
  - **Beginning of Non-Cooperation:** By the repressive measures of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the denial of justice, Gandhi observed that "the only effective means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of the wrongs in future is the **establishment of Swaraj**".
    - Consequently, the non-co-operation campaign was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1919.
    - The Movement was **initiated in support of the Khilafat Movement.**
- **During the Movement:**
  - **Spread of Non-violence Message:** Millions of the countrymen stopped their work on that day as a mark of their support to Gandhi and as antipathy towards the Government.
    - Gandhi along with Ali-brothers made extensive tours to **preach the message of national unity and non-cooperation** with the government.
  - **Boycott of British Titles and Goods:** The programme of non-cooperation consisted of a **surrender of British titles** and honours, **boycott of British Courts**, Legislatures and educational institutions as well as the **boycott of foreign-made goods.**
    - People lit public bonfires of foreign cloth. The **imports of foreign cloth fell** drastically between 1920 and 1922.
  - **Promotion of Swadeshi:** The boycott led to the promotion of **Swadeshi** goods especially hand-spun and **hand-woven Khadi cloth**, the removal of untouchability, the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and abstention of alcoholic beverage.
    - **Charkha** became a household article.
- **People's Response to the Movement:**
  - **Students:** Students in thousands left schools and colleges established by the Government and **joined the movement in large numbers.**
  - **Middle Class People:** They **initially led the movement** but later showed a lot of reservations about Gandhi's programme.
  - **Businessmen:** The economic boycott **received support** from the Indian business group because they had benefited from the nationalists' emphasis on the use of swadeshi.
  - **Peasants:** There was a **massive participation by the peasants.** However, it further led to the confrontation between the 'lower and upper castes'.

- The movement gave an opportunity to the toiling masses to express their real feelings against the British as well as their Indian masters and oppressors.
- **Women:** Women participated in large numbers, **gave up purdah** and offered their ornaments for the Tilak Fund.
  - They took active part in picketing before the shops selling foreign cloth and liquor.
  - The Tilak Swaraj Fund was announced by Mahatma Gandhi after one year of the beginning of the Non-Cooperation movement.
    - The Fund was a homage to Bal Gangadhar Tilak on his first death anniversary, aimed at collecting Rs 1 crore to aid India's freedom struggle and resistance to the British rule.
- **Government's Response:** The police resorted to firing which took the lives of a number of people.
  - Congress and Khilafat Volunteer Organizations were declared unlawful and illegal.
  - Public meetings were banned and most of the leaders barring Gandhi were arrested.
- **Important Personalities Involved:**
  - Eminent persons like C Rajgopalachari, [Vallabhbhai Patel](#), Gopabandhu Das, Ajmal Khan, [Subhash Chandra Bose](#) and [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) joined the movement.
  - **Motilal Nehru** and **Chitranjan Das** also joined the movement by giving up their legal profession.
- **Withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement:** In February 1922, at [Chauri Chaura](#), Uttar Pradesh, twenty two policemen were brutally killed by the violent mob after the conflict between the mob and the policemen of the Thana.
  - The news shocked Gandhi too much. Not happy with the increasingly violent trend of the movement, he **immediately announced the withdrawal of the movement.**
  - Most of the nationalist leaders including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Subhash Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, however, **expressed their disagreement at Gandhi's decision to withdraw the movement.**
  - In March 1922, **Gandhi was arrested** and sentenced to six years in jail.

### Causes of Failure of the Movement

- **No Negotiations by Government:** The movement began showing signs of fatigue as it was not possible to sustain any movement at a high pitch for very long.
  - The Government seemed to be in no mood for negotiations.
- **Loss of Relevance of Khilafat Issue:** The central theme of the agitation, the Khilafat question, dissipated soon.
  - In November 1922, the people of Turkey rose under **Mustafa Kamal Pasha** and **deprived the Sultan of political power.** Turkey was made a secular state.
  - A European style of legal system was established in Turkey and extensive rights were granted to women.
  - Education was nationalised and modern agriculture and industries developed.
  - In 1924, the Khilafat was abolished.
- **Lack of Active Response:** In places like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, which were centres of elite politicians, the response to Gandhi's call was very limited.
  - The response to the call for resignation from the government service, surrendering of titles, etc., was not taken seriously.
- **No Abstinence from Violence:** People had not learnt or fully understood the method of non-violence.
  - The Chauri-Chaura incident marred the spirit of the movement leading to the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation movement.

### Impact of Non-Cooperation Movement

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

and the National Muslim University were established.

- It gave birth to the strongest idea of having Swaraj, the love for the use of Khadi and becoming a Swadeshi.
- **Instilling Unity among Indians:** The country had been united by specific anti feelings, grievances against the British projecting Gandhi as the only unchallenged leader of the century.
  - The Khilafat issue was not directly linked to Indian politics but it provided the immediate declaration to the movement and added advantage of cementing Hindu-Muslim unity against the British.
- **Impacts on the Economic Front:** Foreign goods were boycotted and the import of foreign cloth halved between 1921 and 1922.
  - In many places merchants and traders refused to trade in foreign goods or finance foreign trade.

### Some Important Events

- The **Treaty of Sevres with Turkey** was signed in May 1920 which completely dismembered Turkey.
- In June 1920, an **all-party conference at Allahabad** approved a programme of boycott of schools, colleges and law courts, and asked Mahatma Gandhi to lead it.
- On August 31, 1920, the **Khilafat Committee started a campaign of non-cooperation** and the movement was formally launched.
- In September 1920, at a special session in Calcutta, the **Congress approved a non-cooperation programme** till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were removed and swaraj was established.
- In December 1920, at the **Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress**; the programme of **non-cooperation was endorsed**.
  - Some important organisational changes were made: a **Congress Working Committee (CWC) of 15 members was set up** to lead the Congress from now onwards.

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