

The Constructive Side of Non-co-operation Movement

Abstract

The constructive programme of non co-operation movement was a truthful and non-violent way of winning Poorna Swaraj. It was evolved consisting of Swadeshi, Boycott and national education. The non cooperation movement; on one hand was the measure to oppose the British policies while, on the other hand, it was the constructive programme that stressed on issues like unity, removal of untouchability and self-employment to all. The Gandhian era exposed hollowness of constitutional reforms. It included supporters from all classes of society and active participation of women too. The constructive program took into account policies of economic equality, communal unity and social upliftment of the people.

Gandhiji introduced new ideals into politics and new methods to achieve freedom from the British rule. He gave a new direction to national movement and changed it into a movement of masses Today, our modernized society has an impulsive youth. Any crash in thoughts among politic setups and the people leads to various movements, strikes and reforms. As a matter of fact, the constructive programme of the Gandhian movement proves to be a vital source of inspiration to these agitated conflicts.

Keywords: Non- Co-Operation, Swadeshi, Cotton Spinning, Communal Unity, Removal Of Untouchability, Economics Equality.

Introduction

When the Non-co-operation Movement was launched it had been decided not to participate in the new administrative reforms. One group under the leadership of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru and Vallabh Bhai Patel was in favour of participating in the elections and to wreck the new reforms from within by entering the Legislative Councils both at the centre and in the provinces. They wanted to expose the hollowness of the constitutional reforms as contained in Government of India Act 1919. The other group under the leadership of Vallabh Bhai Patel, C. Raja Gopalachari and Rajendra Prasad opposed the move. They preferred to pursue the constructive programme with a view to bring about greater awakening and also to show to them how congress wanted to improve the economic and social life of the people. ⁽¹⁾

Now a constructive programme was evolved consisting of Swadeshi, Boycott and national education. The Movement started in Bengal but soon it crossed the Frontiers of Bengal. The United Provinces, Punjab, Maharashtra and other part of India began to stir. Both the moderates and the extremist leaders took an active part in it and made efforts to popularize this movement in all parts of the country. Tagore, B.C. Pal, Arvind Ghosh were the leading lights of the movement in Bengal and Lajpat Rai and Tilak in northern and Western India. ⁽²⁾

The call for Boycott and Swadeshi was given at thousands of public meetings all over Bengal, in most of the major cities and towns in India. People were approached not to buy or use foreign goods. This movement found supporters in all classes of the society from Princely landlords and merchants to humble workers and the Sanyasis. Associates of different classes of people sprang up. They organized volunteers to advance the cause of swadeshi and Boycott and to devise ways and means for setting up national educational institutions. Doctors, Lawyers, teachers and workers refused to work for them. Efforts were made to have the services of even the sadhus and Sanyasis to propagate the use of Indian goods. Mass meetings were held and oaths were taken to give up the purchase of foreign goods. Shops dealing with foreign goods were picketed. Foreign cloth, cigarettes and other articles were consigned to

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bonfires in the streets. Students and women took an active part in organizing procession, picketing and bonfires. Large sums were collected to help this movement. Many textile mills, soap and match factories, national banks and insurance companies were set up to help the people. Cheap sale shops of swadeshi goods were opened. Those who did not take part in this movement had to face social boycott. The newspapers and magazines carried reports and articles on this topic and thus helped in making the movement successful. Foreign articles were not used at parties and marriages. The leaders of Bengal set up national education institutions these to impart literary, technical and physical education. The most zealous workers of the movement were students from schools and colleges. They organized voluntary associates for picketing and propaganda. The programmes of swadeshi and Boycott went hand in hand⁽³⁾

And in as much as non-co-operation has been conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice without which no nation can make real progress, and in as much as an opportunity should be given in the very first stage of non-co-operation to every man, woman and child, for such discipline and self-sacrifice, this congress advises adoption of swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale, and in as much as the existing mills of India with indigenous capital and control do not manufacture sufficient cloth for the requirements of the nation, and are not likely to do so for a long time to come, this congress advises immediate stimulation of further manufacture on a large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of the millions of weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honorable calling for want of encouragement.”⁽⁴⁾

Aim of the Study

Mahatma Gandhi is a role model for today's aggression dominant society. Through his constructive side of non-co-operation movement, he aimed at self-improvement and social upliftment. The focus of this movement was on communal unity, removal of untouchability and equality. Today, with evolution of the human era and need of self-satisfaction, the people have become self-oriented. This further explores the root of the condition as to how strikes are common today only because of some differences in thoughts of the government and the common man. Hence, the constructive side proves to be a vital source of learning and inspiration as to how matters can be dealt with harmony and non-violence.

Charkha and Cotton Spinning

Wearing hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar had been compulsory for members of any congress committee. Every one was to spin 2000 yards of yarn every month. The all India Spinners Association was established. Yarns were collected and weavers assembled to weave cloth. Thus wherever hand-spun yarns were collected the problem of weaving came up. This led to the opening of a number of weaving centres and 'Khadi Bandars.' Gandhiji toured the country extensively. Wherever he went he frequently said that he wanted money for Daridranarayan, the "Lord of the poor" or 'god that

resides in poor'. Gandhiji wanted to help the poor by enabling them to food, employment and work in cottage industries. His tour and his personal efforts to help the poor brought him very close to the people. Through this method of contact he spread the message of preparing every Indian to make sacrifice for freedom. They began to think when independence will come then congress will surely take care of their economic uplift. Thus, gradually congress entered the hearts of the masses, particularly the poorer-section. The Charkha became the symbol of the struggle for freedom.⁽⁵⁾

The "Spinning Cotton," introduced by Gandhi that year (requiring members of elected congress organizations to send in 2,000 yards of self-spun yarn every month), had only produced a roll of 10,000 members by the autumn of 1925, when it was withdrawn as an obligatory condition and made optional. The Bombay chronicle in 1925 spoke of a "general paralysis and stagnation." Lajpat Rai in the same year spoke of "Chaos and confusion". "The political situation" he declared, 'is anything but hopeful and encouraging. The people are sunk in depression. Everything – principles, practices, and parties and politics – seem to be in a state of disintegration and dissolution". In this depression of the national movement the sinister symptom of communal disorders was able to spread over the land. The muslim League separated itself again from the congress.

The Hindu Mahasabha

The Hindu Mahasabha conducted a narrow and reactionary counter-propaganda. A section of the leadership of the congress, represented by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, sought after Bardoli to make a decisive turn away from what they regarded as the sterile and unpractical policies of Gandhi by forming a new party, while remaining within the congress, to contest the elections and carry forward the fight on the parliamentary plane within the new legislatures. This new party was named the swaraj party.

The decision to end the boycott of the elections and of the legislatures was undoubtedly, in view of the weakness of the mass movement, a step in advance. It was opposed by the impotent and conservative "No-Changers" in the congress, who clung to Gandhi's "constructive programme" of spinning, temperance, removal of untouchability and similar social reforms as the only path" of salvation : but they were powerless to prevent sanctioning of its adaptation by that section of the congress which desired a more positive policy. By 1925 the congress made its complete and unconditional surrender to the swaraj party, which held the majority and whose leaders took over decisive control, while Gandhi passed for the being in to the background.

Speaking on this controversial topic Gandhi emphasized that every village is to produce and to use all its necessaries and in addition to produce a certain percentage as its contribution to the requirements of the cities. Regarding the heavy industries he was of the opinion that they will be centralized and nationalized. But they will occupy the least part of the vast national activity in the villages.

"In this scheme" Gandhi said, "of nation- wide spinning as a sacrifice, I do not expect the average men or the average women to give more than one hour daily to this work".⁽⁶⁾

Communal Unity

Mahatma Gandhi believed that without communal unity among Hindus, Muslim, Christians, Zorostrians, Jews, etc. achievement of complete Independence was impossible. He urged all the Indians to remove these artificial barriers if they wanted to be an Independent Nation.

Prohibition

Mahatma Gandhi believed that if our goal is to reach through non – violent efforts, we may not leave to the future government, the fate of lakhs of men and women who are labouring under the curse of drink and drugs.

Removal of Untouchability

Once Mahatma Gandhi expressed his views on untouchability:

"Untouchability, the way it is pervading in the Hindu society is against both the man and god. So it is like a poison eating in to the very vitals of Hindu religion. In my opinion it does not have the sanction of the Hindu scriptures".⁽⁷⁾

It is a curse upon Hinduism. He very strongly advocated that we should remove it, if we desire to breath the fresh air of freedom. Mahatma Gandhi devoted most of his time to the uplift of the so called untouchables. He raised his voice against this in human practice. He even stopped using the word 'Untouchable'. He named them 'Harijans' (the children of God) to show that the untouchables were as good human beings as others. He declared that untouchability was a blot on the fair name of India. He also lived with them in their colonies and dined with them to set an example for others to follow. There was no feeling of untouchability in his ashram.

He said in 1915 : "In so far as I have able to study Hinduism outside India, I have felt that it is no part of real Hinduism to have in its fold a mass of people whom I would call untouchables".⁽⁸⁾ This created a very favourable approach for the up lift of the untouchables. In its session in 1917, the congress urged "upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities improved by custom upon the depressed people." Untouchability was declared a 'sin', 'the greatest blot on Hinduism'.⁽⁹⁾ The congress declared that 'Untouchability is another hindrance to swaraj.' This movement had a great effect on the minds of the people. Gandhi himself opted in 1927 :

"No statistics are needed to demonstrate the vast strides that the movement for removal of untouchability has made. The barrier is breaking down everywhere. The higher classes are to be met with in every province ministering to the wants of the suppressed classes in the shape of conducting schools and boarding houses for their children."⁽¹⁰⁾

The Anti- Touchability sub-committee, founded by the congress in 1929 'found the atmosphere favourable everywhere and an eagerness on the part of the caste Hindu workers and leaders in

charge of Public organisation or local bodies to do their duty for alleviating the lot of the untouchables'.⁽¹¹⁾

With the encouragement of Gandhi and efforts of many a workers, many temples and wells were thrown open to them, and a Harijan Sewak Singh was organised in 1932. It opened its branches all over the country. It was the awakening of this conscience that the framers of the constitution of independent India declared:

"Untouchability is abolished and its practices in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of 'untouchability' shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law."⁽¹²⁾ In pursuance of this provision the Indian parliament passed in 1955, the untouchability offences act 1955. Under this act, untouchability has been made a punishable offence. Anybody found guilty under this Act is liable to a fine of Rs. 500/- or imprisonment for six months or both.

Women

Gandhi included service women in the constructive programme because he wanted that women become equal partners in the fight for Swaraj.

Provincial Language and National Language

The masses can make no solid contribution to the constitution of swaraj unless they know how to talk and write in their own language. He felt that being under the spell of English we were impeding the progress of India towards her goal. He advocated that every Indian should learn Hindustani.

To view India as one country, it is very essential to have one national language, which the largest number of people already know and understand and which the others can easily pick up. Gandhi declared that "This language is indisputably Hindi".

Economic Equality

This last is the master key to non-violent independence. Gandhi felt that "working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the leveling up of the semi – starved naked millions on the other. A non – violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the poor exists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby can not last one day in free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainly one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good.

I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach, so is non – violence. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent. We have found it worth the effort. It involves a daily a daily growing appreciation of the working of non – violence."⁽¹³⁾

Kisans and Labour

The programme is not exhaustive. Swaraj is mighty structure. Eighty cores of hands have to work at building it. Of these Kisans i.e., the peasantry are the largest part. In fact being the bulk of them (probably over 80%) the Kisans should be the congress. But they are not When they become conscious of their non – violent strength, no power on earth can resist them. They must not be used for politics. I consider it to be contrary to the non – violent method.

Ahmedabad Labour Union is a model for all india to copy. Its basis is non-violence, pure and simple. It has never had a setback in its career. It has gone on from strength to strength without fuss and without show. It has its hospital, its schools for the children of the mill hands, its classes for adults its, own printing press and Khadi depot, and its own residential quarters. Almost all the hands are voters and decide the fate of elections.⁽¹⁴⁾

Adivasis

The term adivasi, like raniparaj, is a coined word. Raniparaj stands for Kaliparaj (meaning black people, through their skin is no more black than that of any other.) It was coined, I think by Shri Jagatram. The term adivasi (for Bhills, Gonds: of other variously described Hill Tribes of aboriginals) means literally original inhabitants and was coined. I believe, by Thakkar Bapa. *Service of Adivasis is also a part of constructive programme.* Though they are the sixteenth number of this programme, they are not the least in point of importance. Our country is so vast and the races so varied that the best of us cannot know all there is to know of men and their conditions As one discovers this for oneself, one realizes how difficult it is to make good our claim to be one nation, unless every unity has a living consciousness of being one with every other.⁽¹⁵⁾

Students

Mahatma Gandhi's programme for students was under:

1. Students must not take part in party politics. They are students, searchers, not politicians.
2. They may not resort to political strikes. They must have their heroes, but their devotion to them is to be shown by copying the best in their heroes, not by going on strikes, if the heroes are imprisoned or die or are even sent to the gallows, and if their grief is unbearable and if all the students feel equally, schools or colleges may be closed on such occasions, with the consent of their principals. If the principals will not listen, it is open to the students to leave their institution in a becoming manner till the managers repent and recall them. They must have the confidence that, if they are united and dignified in their conduct, they are sure to win.
3. They must all do sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner .Their tools shall be always neat, clean, and in good order and condition. If possible, they will learn to make them themselves. Their yarn will naturally be of the highest quality; they will study the literature about spinning with all its economic, social, moral and political implications.

4. They will be Khadi users all through and use village products to the exclusion of all analogous things, Foreign or machine made.
5. They may not impose the Vande Matram or the National Flag on other. They may wear National Flag buttons on their own persons but not force others to do the same.
6. They can enforce the message of the tricolours flag in their own persons and harbours neither communalism nor untouchability in their hearts. They will cultivate real friendship with student of other faiths and with harijans as if they own Kith and Kin.
7. They will make it a point to give first aid to their injured neighbours and do scavenging and cleaning in the neighbouring villages and instruct village children and adults.
8. They will learn the national language, Hindustani in its present double dress, two forms of speech and two scripts, so that they may feel at home whether Hindi or Urdu is spoken and Nagari or Urdu script is written.
9. They will translate in to their own mother tongue every thing new they may learn, and transmit it is their weekly round to the surrounding villages.
10. They will be scrupulously correct and chivalrous in their behavior towards their girl fellow students.

For working out the programme I have sketched for them, the students must find time. I know that they waste a great deal of time in idleness. The effort will add to their equipments, mental, moral and physical, and they will have made even during their studies a substantial contribution to the freedom movement.

Hindu Muslims Unity

The English had spread the poison of communalism mainly to divide the people so that they could easily rule over India which would become weaker as a result of the Hindu Muslims quarrels. If they remained United they would become strong enough to challenge the British. He, therefore, stressed the unity of the Hindus and the Muslims. He sided with the Muslims during the Khilafat Movement and the Muslims also supported him whole – heartedly when he launched the Non-cooperation Movement against the English. Whenever communal riots broke out in India, he stacked his own life to visit the riot – torn areas and thus restored peace there. It was by dint of Hindu- Muslim unity that Gandhiji had forged that India reached the goal of freedom.

Gandhiji was, to use his own words, 'seeking the friendship of good Mussalmans, and was eager to understand the Mussalam mind through contact with their purest and most patriotic representatives.'⁽¹⁶⁾ He 'therefore never needed any pressure to go with them, wherever they took me, in order to get in to intimate touch with them.'⁽¹⁷⁾ To use his own words again, he 'had realized early enough in South Africa that there was no genuine friendship between the Hindus and the Mussalmans.' He had achieved a measure of success in attracting Muslims to his Satyagrah movement, and his experience there had convinced him 'that it would be on the question of Hindu Muslims Unity that my ahimsa (non-violence) would be put to

its severest test.' He had some contact with Maulana Shaukat Ali, But 'before closer touch could be established' he were imprisoned during the war for their views on Turkey. Gandhi's views were well-known, and after the imprisonment of the Ali brothers, he was 'invited by Muslim friends to attend the session of the Muslim League at Calcutta, where he addressed the Muslims on their duty to secure the brother's release. A little later he was invited to the Muslims College at Aligarh, Where he made a speech and asked 'young men to be fakirs for the services of the motherland. In those days he felt that if he were to become a true friend of the Muslims, He must render all possible help in securing the release of the Ali Brothers, and just settlement of the Khilafat question. In pursuance of this belief, he opened correspondence with the Government, justifying the demand for the release of Khilafat prisoners.⁽¹⁸⁾

The amalgamation of the Khilafat Movement and the Non- cooperation Movement led to the Hindu Muslims Unity as was not witnessed before. The Urban Muslims were brought into the nationalist movement and they had been to an extent responsible for the feeling of enthusiasm and exhilaration in the country in those days. The dual policy of the British Government towards Turkey forced the Indian Muslims to Launch the Khilafat Movement against the British. It led to such Hindu – Muslims Unity as was never seen before. Mahatma Gandhi took advantage of this suitable opportunity and started the Non- Cooperation Movement in 1920.

In this connection Pattbhi Sitaramaiya has rightly pointed out. "The Triveni of Khilafat and the Punjab wrong and the invisible flow of inadequate reforms, became full to brim and by their confluence enriched both in volume and content the stream of national discontent."⁽¹⁹⁾ From the Above account it becomes quite clear that Gandhiji introduced new ideals in to politics and new methods to achieve freedom from British rule. He gave a new direction to the national movement and changed it into a movement of the masses.

Conclusion

Never before the non-co-operation movement was the country so awakened, so active, so united and so determined as during the eventful months of the emergence of the constructive side of non-co-operation movement. This movement in co-operated women, students, lawyers and people from all classes of the society and thus, proved to be a path where the society united. Furthermore, it was due to this programme that the Indians started paving paths to independence acting as one.

This movement is still appreciated and considered by people as one of the greatest reforms of the Independence struggle.

Acknowledgment

Mahatma Gandhi was one amongst the greatest leaders of his time. He took an active part in the Indian Independence movement and led India to the path of Independence through truth and righteousness.

Right from the beginning I was fascinated to write a Research paper about the constructive side of non-co-operation movement as Mahatma Gandhi through his ideals had always inspired me.

Furthermore, I would like to my parents and who have been a source of encouragement and support. In addition, I would also like to thank Mr. K.M. Tripathi (Ex-Director of Education) who has been of great help in completing this research paper.

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