

KHILAFAT AND NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

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India feelings remained as wounded as ever. Rather the events taking place in the wake of the Rowlatt Agitation made the wound bleed profusely. The political repression and the resultant turmoil had convulsed the whole nation from end to end. "The echo of General Dyer's fusillade"¹ rang into the ears of Indians. The people, their pride wounded, had asked, When Satyagraha was going to be resumed?" The question of Khilafat coupled with Punjab wrongs gave the opportunity to resume Civil Disobedience Movement.

The Muslims of Meerut carried on in a violent propaganda against the British on account of demeaning behaviour against Turkey. Meerut became a centre for the conduct of Khilafat Agitation. The people observed on 17 October 1919 as 'Khilafat day'. Gandhi himself wrote letter to the press emphasizing the importance of the 'Khilafat day'. He appealed to every Hindu man and woman to observe the day and thereby put a scared seal on Hindu-Mohammaden bond.² The people observed 'hartal' and held a 'monster meeting' outside the Jama Masjid on the Khilafat day.³ While many programmes were put forward to carry on the Khilafat Movement, Gandhi came out with ideas of 'Non-cooperation' which was both a slogan as well as complete programme.

Gandhiji's visit to Meerut is an event of historical importance for the people of Meerut. Gandhiji arrived here on 22 January, 1920, one week after Ali Brothers' visit to Meerut. Gandhiji reached at Devnagri School at 9:30 A.M. on 22 January, 1920, where a large sea of people was waiting for him. He was welcomed by flowers and garlands. He was taken out in a well-decorated coach in a procession. The drum player at the head of the procession marched slowly with these lines in rhythm: "Jis din buland boga kaumi nishan hamara, dekhna jab hamara kaumi nishan uncha fehraya jayega"⁴ (*The moment when our community mark is hoisted, hen ou must see when our community mark is hoisted higher*). There was a band behind the drum, followed by a large number of volunteers on bicycles and horses, and many more on foot. The volunteers were divided into several types of volunteer corps. The volunteers wore different types of dresses, as Egyptian,

Arabian, Turkey to represent them. A large group of volunteers, called 'Gandhiji' army,⁵ wore hand-woven and knit clothes and they were in dhotis and jurtas and pagri (turban) made from khadi (cotton). They marched on foot with sticks in their hands. Some of them carried flags which bore the photographs of Gandhiji and Tilak. On other flags was written "Satyagraha Mandali". The volunteers chiefly included the students of Meerut College and other schools. The Muslims shouted slogans of Bande Mataram and they had applied a mark of sandal on their foreheads.⁶ The Hindus wore crescent moon mark on their hands.

The procession stopped at the Kamboh Darwaja, where Mohammad Yamin presented a welcome note on behalf of the Nagar Palika. Gandhiji briefly answered to this in Urdu: "If the question of Turkey is not solved without any prejudice, then a wave of dissatisfaction would rise in India⁷. In such a situation, Satyagraha, and not weapons, should be used."⁸

Gandhiji went to Mustafa castle located at West End Road at 12:30 noon. He took his lunch with Barrister Ismail Khan. The lunch was simple and was served in leaf plates.⁹ At 2:30 P.M., Gandhiji went to Sanatan Dharma Hall to address a women assembly. The assembly comprised only of women. No man was allowed to enter there, including Pt. Sitaram¹⁰. Gandhiji taught the lesson of simple life and high ideals to women. he advised them to keep away from make-up, contentiousness and ornaments. He was presented an address of welcome.¹¹

From there Gandhiji proceeded to Barfkhana grounds to address a large gathering. In the public meeting, he was presented letters of greetings, one by the Khilafat Samiti and the other by the people of Meerut. Barrister Mohammad Husein read out the Khilafat letter of greeting and presented it in a black bag as a mark of grief.

The other letter of greetings was read by Pt. Ghasiram in English and Mohammad Aslam Sefi in Urdu. The public meeting was thrilled by the slogan of Bande Mataram and recital of some poems.¹²

After the public meeting, the students of Meerut College requested him to visit Meerut College, which was accepted by Gandhiji. The premises of Meerut College reverberated with the slogans admiring Gandhiji. Gandhiji emphasized the need of character building there. While returning, Gandhiji remarked that the students of Meerut College did nothing but busied themselves in slogan shouting.¹³

The memorable period for political activities in Meerut from 14 to 22 January was important for Hindu-Muslim unity. The firmness of Hindu-Muslim unity could be seen for eight days. The visits of Ali brothers and Gandhiji to Meerut further strengthened this bond. Thousands of people came from surrounding villages and towns to have a look at their favourite leaders.¹⁴

Commenting upon these visits, a CID Officer wrote that there was no doubt that the arrivals of Gandhiji and Ali brothers in Meerut had destabilized the minds of the people.¹⁵ The officers reported to the government that the Gandhiji's principles of Swadeshi and Satyagraha are mostly opposed to British, while Ali brothers were adding fuel to fire in already turbulent Muslim anger.¹⁶

The circumstances in the country appeared to be suitable and favourable for the the success of non-cooperation movement and leadership of Gandhiji. On the auspicious occasion of convening of the Second Khilafat conferences on 29 February, 1920 in Calcutta, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, in his presidential address, recommended the non-cooperation plan of Gandhiji and requested Muslims to abide by Gandhiji's non-cooperation plan.¹⁷ Gandhiji felt that Muslim brothers were stirred to do something. Gandhiji published his statement regarding the outline of his programme, which was as follow: We already possess indications of dissatisfaction in Muslim brothers, and this dissatisfaction can take the form of frenzy. This frenzy would certainly take the form of violence and I wish to make everyone understand that violence is like killing oneself.¹⁸

Gandhiji asked the people to abide by the following prohibitions:

1. No violence should occur in thought, speech and deed.
2. No boycott should take place, in my opinion, this is a form of violence. Even if it is desirable, it would be completely impracticable.
3. No rest should be taken until minimum aims are achieved.
4. No other questions be joined with Khilafat.¹⁹

Gandhiji decided to observe 19 March as the Khilafat Day and exhorted the people to observe this day as the day of national grief. He appealed to people to observe fast and strike.

Recommending the non-cooperation movement, Gandhiji stated in his Khilafat declaration: We possess the most sacred and strongest means in the form of non-cooperation movement. When

this is devoid of all types of violence's, then non-cooperation transforms into a duty; while cooperation signifies degrees and disrespect and a threat to the religious sentiments desired by somebody. England cannot expect us to bow down meekly; it has relinquished us of our rights unjustly, which is a question of life and death for Muslims.²⁰

After the visit of these national leaders to Meerut, preparations were afoot to give concrete form to the non-cooperation plans. Speakers were invited to emphasize upon the importance of the Khilafat Day. The CID informed that a preparation movement is being run for many days prior to 19 March.²¹ On 17 March, Maulana Syed Ahmed and Pt. Shivnarayan delivered inciting speeches at Hapur. Assessing the incidents of the Khilafat Day, the CID wrote that Dr. Shamsulbari and Mohammad Alim delivered objectionable speeches in Meerut. On that day, almost fifteen thousand Muslims gathered at Idgah in the company of Hindu leaders. They repeated and passed proposals on the occasion of the second Khilafat conference.²² This meeting was chaired by Qazi Nazmuddin and those who spoke at the meeting were Maulana Alim, Maulana Nazar, Dr. Shamsulbari, Hazi Mohammad Hussein, Maulana Mubarak Hussein, etc.

Gandhiji described the observation of Khilafat Day as a great success and victory for the Satyagraha.²³ Expressing pleasure on this occasion, Gandhiji wrote: "No one could believe one year ago that the frenzied elements in Muslims would continue to maintain peace even on questions of life and death for them."²⁴

A United Province Khilafat conference was organized at Meerut from 21 March, 1920 to 23 March, 1920.²⁵ Reaghukul Tilak, a famous Congress leader of Meerut, described: "I was given a good luck and special right to join the Khilafat conference at Meerut in the second fortnight of January. In this conference, Gandhiji at first presented the plan for non-cooperation movement before the people. Beginning his address, Gandhiji said all those people who were carrying honours and posts, or were getting grants or stipends, they should relinquish all that. The use of foreign clothes should be given up. Hand-woven and hand-spun cloth should be encouraged in all possible forms. Emphasizing upon the need of complete non-violence for the success of the movement, Gandhiji said that it was necessary under all conditions. When Gandhiji was speaking, Maulana Shaukat Ali stood up in a quite dramatic way and pulled off his necktie.²⁶ Mahadev Desai too took part in this conference in January 1920. The conference was fully successful. Leaders and maulvis from all parts

of the country participated in it. Their number exceeded well over 400. This was due to the untiring efforts of Mohammad Husein, Ismail Khan and Nazmuddin.²⁷ This conference of Meerut was of historical importance, because it not only discussed the future programmes of the Khilafat Day, but also the plans of non-cooperation movement. The boycott proposal was passed on 22 March in the Khilafat conference after a heated debate. The people were so excited by the speech of Maulana Alim that many of them pulled off their neckties. Gandhiji, after his long speech, declared the relinquishment of cooperation with the government.²⁸ Gandhiji said that if the question of Turkey was not resolved according to the Shariat laws, then a date would be set by the Central Khilafat committee in which both Hindus and Muslims would participate, in which the people holding the posts of judges and other honorary posts would be asked to resign. The Indian soldiers would be asked to offer their services to the motherland in the form of volunteers with their weapons and they would be asked to make use of their land for growing grains. And if they failed in this venture, the farmers would be asked to not pay taxes to the government, Mahatma Gandhi inspired the people to firm up their trust and strengthen the Swadeshi movement and bring about Hindu-Muslim unity and adhere to non-violence.²⁹ The people of Meerut were given the weapon of non-cooperation to force the government to heed to the demands of non-cooperators.

On the assurance of national leaders in the Provincial Khilafat Conference, the period from 6 April to 13 April was observed as the national week. It was decided that the national week would be utilized to educate the popular opinion in the favour of Khilafat and to display hatred towards the unjust activities that occurred in Punjab. A public meeting was organized at Town Hall on 6 April under the chairmanship of Barrister Mohammad Ismail Khan.³⁰ Barrister Mohammad Hussein Rai Bahadur Chaudhary, Raghubir Narayan Singh, Qazi Nazmuddin, Rai Saheb Pt. Sitaram, etc. too spoke in the meeting. The meeting passed a resolution in favour of national demands with common consent. It was demanded to repeal the Rowlatt Act.³¹ A special flag costing four annas was prepared as a symbol for sale. The sale proceeds were sent to the Jallianwalla Bagh Memorial fund. The sale of this flag was a special feature during the national week. On 6 April, 1920, a public meeting was organized by the people of Mawana in the Lala Gangamal Dharamshala, under the chairmanship of Tufail Ahmad.³² This meeting was addressed by Lala Harswaroop, Pt. Dewan Dutt, Babu Raghunandan Saran. The people were told about the cruel actions by the government on the people of Punjab under the martial law. Such meetings were also held in Ghaziabad and Hapur. The

cruelties meted out to the people of Punjab under the martial law were propagated in meetings held at different places. The people were motivated for cancellation of the Rowlatt Act.

On the call of local leaders, the first district conference was held on 2 and 3 May, 1920, chaired by Pt. Sitaram.³³ This was the first opportunity for holding a district conference in Meerut. Summarizing the historical, social and political features of the district of Meerut, Pt. Sitaram drew the attention of the meeting to the events in Punjab, Khilafat movement and reforms. He also drew the attention of the people towards the cruel and barbarous incidents in Punjab which were committed in the name of law and order. He laid special emphasis on spreading the network of strong organizations everywhere.³⁴ He stimulated the representatives who attended the conference and called on them to become active and go among the people to educate them about their constitutional rights. He said that the people should be inspired to study the prevalent problems and to express their grievances. He said that a local newspaper and committee should be held in each town and village of the district so that the people could devote in earnest their energies in the service of the nation.

The publication of the report of the Hunter Committee removed all doubts about the profession of justice and honesty of the British people. The people were filled with hatred and remorse. On 13 June, 1920 a public meeting was held of the people of Meerut under the chairmanship of Pt. Pyarelal sharma.³⁵ Inciting speeches were delivered and the following proposal was passed:

The public meeting of the people of Meerut censures strongly this report of the Hunter Committee and considers it a blot on the British justice and demands that action should be taken against the guilty officers and they should be punished. General Dyer should be tried and Lord Chelmsford should be recalled.³⁶

The incidents over the past few months had stirred the Indian sentiments all the more. Hatred against Britain reached its zenith. Costs were rising. There was no hope of the solution of the Turkish problem. The British council of ministers was firm on its decision. Dyer was rewarded for his barbarity on Indians. The report of the Hunter Committee shook the faith of Gandhiji in British rule³⁷ and he became restless.³⁸

In the meeting of the Central Khilafat Committee, held in the first week of June 1920 at Allahabad, it was decided that a non-cooperation committee would be constituted to execute the non-cooperation movement.³⁹

The non-cooperation committee declared its programmes.⁴⁰ It included a decision to boycott schools, colleges and courts.⁴¹ The committee decided to boycott the councils and relinquishment of honours, posts and honourable posts. The public was requested to give momentum to the Swadeshi movement. Gandhiji acquainted the Viceroy with his decision that the Swadeshi movement would be started from 1 August, 1920⁴² An indication of the non-cooperation movement was given by Gandhiji in a letter to Lord Chelmsford in which he relinquished honours and posts.⁴³ The day of 1 August was chosen for the commencement of a non-violent struggle. But on account of the death of Lokmanya Tilak., it was postponed The Muslim community inculcated a massive opposition and hatred against the British government. The press was much active. Extremist newspapers came to be published in the whole of country. The special session of Indian National Congress was called in September 1920 at Calcutta to consider Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement. C.R. Das, Bipin Chandra Pal, Annie Besant, Madan Mohan Malviya, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Lala Lajpat Rai, etc. opposed Gandhiji's non- cooperation movement. Gandhiji was much undecided when Madan Mohan Malviya and other leaders appealed to postpone the non-cooperation programme until it was declared by regular session of the Congress.⁴⁴ Gandhiji said in a public speech that the people should immediately start the non-cooperation movement without waiting for the Congress. The Congress should be compelled to not take any other decision.⁴⁵

It became quite simple due to the support of the Muslim Community and death of Tilak to get the resolution passed at the Calcutta session. Still, the opposition was so furious and massive that Gandhiji had never faced in all his political life.

Though the resolution had been passed but the aims and scope of the non-cooperation movement were expanded by the inclusion of the Punjab wrongs and the issue of swaraj proposed by Lala Lajpat Rai and Vijay Raghurib the special session of the Congress and his non-cooperation programme was approved.⁴⁶

In pursuance of the resolution, the attention of the Indian people was drawn to the following aspects:

- (a) Titles, honorary posts and nominated posts are relinquished.
- (b) Prohibition from attending any government functions, durbar or other programmes.
- (c) To take out children from government-aided schools and colleges and to establish national institutions in their place.
- (d) To boycott British courts and to establish mediating courts.
- (e) Prohibition for recruitment of service in Mesopotamia.
- (f) To take back nomination by candidates for election in vidhan parishads and boycott of election.
- (g) Use of native items and boycott of foreign goods.⁴⁷

The representatives from Meerut returned from the Calcutta Congress Session with the approved resolution. Elections were held in November-December amidst new reforms. It was shown during the election how strong the Congress has a hold over people. Even those people who had opposed Gandhiji at Calcutta and had filed nominations for the elections, took back their names from the election campaign.⁴⁸

The Meerut District Congress Committee passed a resolution keeping in with the Calcutta Congress session and requested the Congress nominated members to withdraw their names.⁴⁹ This appeal had a positive effect and many withdrew their names. Pt. Sitaram, who considered Gopal Krishna Gokhale as his life ideal, decided to fight election for the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Parishad⁵⁰ despite appeal to boycott the election for legislative councils, Mahatma Gandhi too had to reconsider his decision to boycott the elections for legislative councils.⁵¹

The resolution passed at the Calcutta session was approved and confirmed at the Nagpur session.⁵² The Congress congratulated the people on the success of the execution of programmes under the non-cooperation movement. The regular session of Congress put its seal of approval on the programmes of the congress as adumbrated in the special session at Calcutta.

The adoption of non-violent, non-cooperation aimed at the realization of Swaraj by peaceful means by the people of India. A meeting of the all India Congress Committee was held on 31 March,

1921 at Baijwada in which a definite programme was chalked out to collect one crore rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund.⁵³

Following the non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji, schools and colleges in many parts of the country were boycotted. The students in Meerut boycotted classes and supported the non-cooperation movement. A large number of national institutions were founded in the country, the primary purpose of which was character building and inculcation of the spirit of constructive service to the nation. The students of the Faiz-e-Am school went on an indefinite strike and they requested the school managers to refuse any government grant.⁵⁴ The students of Meerut College boycotted their classes and some of them dropped out completely.⁵⁵ Vishnusharan Dublish wrote to the principal of Meerut College, William Jesse that he could no more continue his studies in that college which was given a grant by the government whose hands are stained with the blood of his countrymen.⁵⁶ Bhagwati Sahai asked the principal to strike off his name from the school registration because he would now educate his countrymen in the high ideals of non-violence, non-cooperation movement and spirit of relinquishment, self-help, self-respect and self-discipline. The students not only boycotted the classes, but also participated in the non-cooperation movement.

The students of Meerut College sent their good wishes to the students of Muslim National University⁵⁷, Aligarh and Benaras Hindu University⁵⁸. The students of Meerut College wrote to the students of Aligarh:

"We the students of Meerut College express our hearty sympathy with your movement. We emancipate ourselves from the wastefulness of the contemporary educational system and unsuitable experiences, and we pay good wishes for success in your educational work which is being guided independently in a national manner. We the students of Meerut College proceed ahead with complete hearty sympathy".

The students prayed to God that they be inspired and energized to take the proper steps for the welfare of the motherland in that hour of calamity and take proper action.

The students of Meerut College sent a similar message to their companions at Benaras Hindu University and admired them greatly for their moral courage and objective of independence.⁵⁹ The students of Baraut and Hapur also boycotted their schools.⁶⁰ When the students were found

involved in the movement, the officers decided to suppress the movement. Wearing the Gandhi cap became a national duty for students, but it was a point of peevishness for officers. The district school inspector Mr. Cox put a ban on wearing the Gandhi cap in the school and ordered that the guilty student will have to quit school.⁶¹

Pt. Sitaram wrote a letter to Headmaster Plomore that the order of banning the wearing of Gandhi cap had stirred the student world.⁶² He warned that applying this order strictly has created an excitement in the people and it amounts to strengthen their hands who support the boycott of educational institutions.⁶³ He expressed surprise that an unnecessary storm was being created on a trivial matter, and that the students should not be punished unnecessarily on mere wearing of Gandhi cap. He requested the headmaster to reconsider his orders and displeasing decision. Unfortunately, this request was not only refused, but also the district magistrate, C.L. Alexander considered it as an improper interference in a matter of school discipline.⁶⁴

The headmaster of government school, Mr. Plomer prohibited students from writing on the school walls and the students were whipped if they came to school wearing the Gandhi cap. Wearing the Gandhi cap became a symbol of Swadeshi. It affected almost all local educational institution. The students of Meerut College assembled on the incident of whipping a student and convened a public meeting, in which the headmaster was severely censured.⁶⁵ The orders against the Gandhi cap affected many schools. The principal of Vaishya School, Pt. Gopinath Sinha expressed surprise why students were whipped for wearing the Gandhi Cap.⁶⁶ One day, a student came to school wearing the Gandhi cap. The headmaster asked him why he had worn that cap. The boy hurriedly replied that it symbolized Swadeshi. At this the headmaster commented what he thought about his clothes, they were not Swadeshi. The student remained silent then, but on the next day, he came to school in complete khadi clothes. This was considered to be an ideal by other students. The Gandhi cap movement became not only a symbol of demonstration by students, but a matter of popular opposition also. Pt. Gopinath Sinha has written that the movement was strengthening at that time and many students were being expelled from schools; this was not limited to only local committees, rather this process was being carried on in many schools of the district and even in other districts. This dress had become a symbol of unity for students.⁶⁷ A public meeting was held at Barfkhana grounds towards the end of December 1920. Pt. Pyarelal Sharma spoke at the meeting in a very influential and stimulating way. He criticized the ill-treatment by the headmaster of the government

high school that he had meted out only due to wearing of the Gandhi cap.⁶⁸ Sharma immediately appealed to open a national high school because it was according to the national programme, also it had become an immediate need in view of the boycotted and expelled students.

The speech of Pt. Pyarelal Sharma proved so effective that the very next day a tent was pitched in the courtyard of the kothi (large house) of Ram Kripal Singh, located in Prahlad Vatika and a parallel school was started with its educational programme.⁶⁹ Thus the first national school was set up at Meerut. Pt. Pyarelal Sharma became its first headmaster. Later, Pt. Pyarelal Sharma requested Gopinath Sinha to assume the post of the school headmaster. This request was acceded to by Pt. Gopinath Sinha. Some professors of Meerut College, including Nandlal Bhatnagar, offered their honourable services. The school was then transferred to a house in Khandak Mohalla from Prahlad Vatika⁷⁰. And from there, land was allotted on lease by Meerut Nagar Palika on a rent of about Rs. 12 per annum. Swami Satyadev Parivrajak inaugurated this school in the new building.⁷¹ Ch. Vijaypal Singh, who had resigned his service in the CDA department, joined the school as a teacher.⁷² The assistant headmaster of this school was Master Jagannath of this national institution. We find details of the school from the Diary of Gopinath Sinha. He wrote that about 50 students who had left the Vaishya School along with him had taken admission to this national high school. The institution progressed fast and soon it became a first class blooming and flowering institution in which 300 student studied under 20 teachers. The whole organization was well disciplined; its outcome was that this institution became a centre of all congress activities in the town and a place of character building for students.⁷³

The basic policy of boycotting schools and colleges proved to be very effective in the whole country. The call of Gandhiji in his speeches before the students had a massive effect on the student world.⁷⁴ An all India Indian Student Conference was held in Nagpur in December 1920 in which they prepared a basis for participation in the movement. The students were so enthusiastic that they bunked classes in order to join the non-cooperation movement. From amongst students were taken the future freedom fighters and district leaders. Many people in government services resigned from their posts. Ch. Vijaypal Singh resigned from his service in the CDA department.⁷⁵ Qazi Bashiruddin left his service in the government school.⁷⁶ Sukhlal Bhatnagar, a military accountant clerk, too resigned from his service.⁷⁷ Pt. Pyarelal Sharma, Gopinath Sinha, and other high quality barristers left their job.⁷⁸ Ch. Raghuvir Narayan Singh gave up his title of Rai Bahadur and resigned from the

post of his honourable magistrate.⁷⁹ Munshi Mohammad Abdullah resigned from his post in Baraut Notified Area Committee.⁸⁰

The movement activities during 1921 brought a reawakening in the masses. The progress of the movement was manifested in the form of increasing consciousness in the people. The worker of the non-cooperation movement went from village to village with the message of non-cooperation. Vishnusharan Dublish, Ch. Vijaypal Singh and Shivdayal toured more than 1200 villages out of a total of 1580 village and held public meetings.⁸¹ They interfered in the peace meetings supported by the government. These peace meetings were being participated by those who wanted to please the government in order to derive some selfish interest. In order to make these meetings ineffective, the leaders of the non-cooperation movement adopted a new method. They started to conduct their own meetings near the venue of these meetings. These meetings reverberated with the slogans of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, Hindu-Muslim ekta zindabad, Todi bachcha hai-hai, Jai bolo rasgulle ki' etc.⁸² The latter slogans displayed the enmity of the peace workers which meant to comment upon the pro-government volunteers' desire for a cup of tea. The Khilafat and non-cooperation volunteers' held prabhat feris (morning walks). They went round densely populated localities. These prabhat feris were held daily under the leadership of Master Sundarlal, Gulam Siddiqi, Ramswarup Sharma⁸³, Ramchandra Sharma, Thakur Moti Singh alias Brahma Swarup Soti. The people in the prabhat feris sang these lines;

The mother of Mohammad Ali directed:

"Boli Amma Mohammad Ali Ki,

Jan beta Khilafat par de do.

Sath hain tere Saukat Ali bhi,

Jan Beta Khilafat par de do."

(The mother of Mohammad Ali calls upon to sacrifice yourself for the cause of Khilafat. They are accompanied by Saukat Ali too, O sons, give up your life for the cause of Khilafat.)

Mahatma Gandhi directed:

"Kato charkha mile swaraj,

Yahi Kahte Gandhi maharaj".

(Spin cotton and get self-rule. This is the word of Gandhiji)

And,

"Aa gaya karmyuga, kuchh karm karma seekh lo,

Desh dharm jati hit par hans hans ke marna seekh lo."

(The time to act has arrived, it is the time to learn to act. Let us learn to sacrifice ourselves in the interests of nation, religion, race with a smile on our face.)

Brahma Swarup Soti (Khar Merathi) emerged as a poet in the freedom struggle of Meerut. The prabhat feris used to end with one or two songs (nazm) of Khar Merathi. These songs reflected to the sentiments of patriotism in the people at that time.

The people of Meerut came forward to contribute to the Tilak Swaraj Fund. The money collected in 1921 amounted to more than Rs. 30,00084 and 17,000 members were made the members of the Indian National Congress. This work carried on rapidly. Within a year in 1920-21, the people of Meerut collected Rs. 1,25,000 for the Tilak Swaraj Fund and 1,33,000 people were enrolled as members of the Congress. The Bharat Yuva Mandal was set up.⁸⁵ Its function was to collect money for the Tilak Swaraj Fund in a new manner. Its members went from door to door for demanding atta (flour) and they sold it for collecting money for the Tilak Swaraj Fund.⁸⁶

The swadeshi and khaddar (cotton) movements were going on slowly. The students of Meerut set up a Swadeshi Hitkari Store⁸⁷ in 1921 for the use of Swadeshi and khadi articles, its encouragement and propagation. A Swadeshi Store was also set up at Gandhi Ashram in Subhash Bazar where the Gandhi Ashram was located then. The Muslims of Meerut also appealed their brethren to wear khadi and hand-woven clothes and passed two resolutions.⁸⁸ Enthusiasm was so high for Swadeshi that even Ram Barat Yatra too was taken out in the Khadi dress. Angered by it, the Collector refused to make any police arrangements for it. The volunteers of Bharat Yuvak Mandal and Khilafat did the job of police by maintaining discipline in the procession. It was a matter of great elation that the Muslims displayed their vigorous participation in the celebrations of Ramlila.

Gandhiji appealed to the people to give up foreign clothes and dresses, pile them in a bonfire and put them to asdhes.⁸⁹ The people of Meerut removed their foreign clothes in a public meeting.⁹⁰ At Mandi Bazar in Hapur, Mahashaya Pyarelal conducted a large holi (bonfire) of foreign clothes. Mahashaya Pyarelal came to be known as Hapuri Gandhi later. In the same way, organizations were set up at other places for making such bonfires. The bonfire of foreign clothes was held at Ramlila grounds in Ghaziabad.⁹¹ Thus, the foreign clothes were given up and piled and then burned to ashes everywhere.

Alongside non-cooperation movement, another important event occurred in Meerut. The Khilafat session was held at Meerut on 7,8,9 April, 1921, for which invitations and intimations, etc. were sent.⁹² The session was held to discuss and take decisions on many other issues, such as expansion of non-cooperation movement, repressive policy of the government, policy of Indian Muslims under the prevalent circumstances, etc.⁹³ The session was attended by the Ulema of Deoband, Swami Shankaracharya Jagadguru, Dr. Kichloo, Hakim Azmal Khan, Maulana Andul Kalam Azad, Srimati Sarojini Naidu, etc.⁹⁴ Nawab Ismail Khan, the chairman of the welcome committee, read out the welcome letter and said that Swaraj and only Swaraj was the solution to these problems.⁹⁵ Many resolutions were passed at the session. The chief resolution was that the Muslims should continue to join the struggle for Swaraj and non-cooperation movement and they were requested to join the Congress too. Speaking at the proposal, Mohammad Ali said that the realization of Swaraj was a religious duty of every Muslim. Eliminating any doubts in the Muslim minds, he said that by Swaraj was not meant Hindu rule, as had been accused in the Bareilly Eatwa.⁹⁶ He also reasoned that the Quran too approved of non-cooperation. He explained to Muslims, "By Swaraj is meant foremost and if you attach more significance to religious freedom more than any other freedoms, then it would be your greatest sacrifice."⁹⁷

The enthusiastic speeches in the Khilafat session created a terror in the government circle. At the time of the conclusion of the session, a provoking pamphlet was distributed. The police searched for the responsible man immediately.⁹⁸ Ashad Hussein, deputy superintendent of police, Meerut arrested Syed Ayub Ahmad, assistant secretary of Provincial Khilafat Samiti from the office of Meerut Khilafat committee under the Indian Penal Code sections 124A and 153A.

The arrest and punishment to Syed Ayub Ahmad created anger in the people.⁹⁹ The district magistrate of Meerut prohibited Asaf Ali to hold any public meetings within the limits of Meerut Nagar Palika under the section 144 of Indian Penal Code.¹⁰⁰ The Muslims of Meerut opposed the government policy of repression. Its reaction was manifested on 14 June, 1921 when 5000 Muslims gathered in a public meeting at the local Jama Masjid. The audience were asked by Abdul Kalam Azad and Abdulbari to get ready for jehad (struggle) in case of a fatwa.¹⁰¹ Two days later on 16 June, another meeting was held at Jama Masjid. Maulana AbdulKalam Azad was given good wishes for making religious declarations and it was also announced that the Muslims of Meerut should be fully ready to act according to the declaration.¹⁰²

The attention of the provincial government was drawn to this serious situation which had arisen due to the activities of the non-cooperation movement.¹⁰³

The activities of the Khilafat supporters and non-cooperation supporters went on unabated. The government resorted to the policy of arrest of non-cooperation volunteers and repression in the whole country. The government arrested Ali brothers and conducted their trial, accusation and punishment at Karachi. Qazi Bashiruddin Ahmad of Meerut went to hear and watch the judicial trial of Ali brothers.¹⁰⁴ Gandhiji felt the opportunity, he appealed to the Muslims to obey the orders of Ali brothers and, if necessary, get ready for sacrificing themselves.¹⁰⁵

A publishing institution of Meerut, Qaumi Darul Ishaat (Kotla Meerut) published 40 books on Khilafat and Swaraj written by different writers and leaders, which included the books written by Abdul Kalam Azad, Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammad Ali etc.

Seth Jan Mohammad Chotani, a member of the Bombay Khilafat Samiti Visited Meerut and appreciated the efforts of Qaumi Darul Ishaat.¹⁰⁶ A procession of Seth Jan Mohammad Chotani was taken out. He was presented with letters of honours on behalf of the provincial and district khilafat samitis and district congress committee. He was presented a bag of fifteen thousand rupees and a promise was made to collect an amount of thirty thousand rupees from Meerut city alone.

The non-cooperation movement was going on in its full flow. The Government of India was busy in the preparation for the visit of Prince of Wales who was scheduled to arrive on 17 November, 1921.¹⁰⁷ The Congress, under the directions of Gandhiji, decided to boycott the Prince.¹⁰⁸ Gandhiji started to propagate the disobedience movement. Immediately after the announcement of

the disobedience movement, Meerut district political conference¹⁰⁹ was held at the Garh fair in Garhmukteswar from 12 November to 14 November, 1921 under the chairmanship of Pt. Motilal Nehru.¹¹⁰ He called upon the people of Meerut to hate only speech and act really.¹¹¹ He recited the statement of a Pharsi poet, which meant:

"The man is the one who keeps his tongue shut and opens his hands."¹¹²

All people attended the conference in Khadi. An exhibition of Swadeshi goods was held in the conference. Keeping in with the national programme, two important resolutions were passed in the district conference; one resolution concerned the boycott of the Prince of Wales, and another concerned the cessation of land tax.¹¹³

Mawana Tehsil was selected for complete land tax cessation. The speakers laid special emphasis on elimination of cruelties by zamindars (landlords) on farmers.¹¹⁴ The farmers stopped paying their taxes. The officers took harsh steps to suppress the movement.¹¹⁵ On 17 November, the day of the arrival of Prince of Wales, was observed a complete strike in not only Meerut City and cantonment, but also the whole district.

On 23 November, all volunteer organizations in Uttar Pradesh were declared illegal. Section 144 was enforced in Meerut City, according to which prohibition was enforced on disobedience movement, strike, boycott, demonstration and relinquishment of civil or government services for a period of two months.¹¹⁶ On 26 November, the house of Qazi Nazmuddin, the chairman of Khilafat committee was searched by the police. The papers pertaining to volunteers and Khilafat committee were seized.¹¹⁷ On 28 November, a military flag march was taken out in the morning. The offices of the Congress and Khilafat were searched.¹¹⁸

Despite the police repression, many people from Meerut went to Ahmedabad to attend the Congress Session. The session decided to continue with the disobedience movement. Gandhiji selected Bardoli for this auspicious task.

The representatives of Meerut were so enthusiastic that they sought permission from Dr. Ansari, Chairman of Delhi State Congress Committee for Satyagraha. Dr. Ansari asked them to wait until his visit to Meerut. He visited Meerut on 6 January, 1922¹¹⁹ and he hinted the people of Meerut to take forward Satyagraha, though the local leadership was not ready in this direction, but they

permitted the volunteers. 200 volunteers demonstrated in teams on 15 January. Jyoti Prasad and Master Jagannath were sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment under section 17A of Cr.PC Amendment Act on the accusation of arranging volunteers for the Satyagraha.¹²⁰

Vishnusharan Dublith undertook Satyagraha in Mawana. Mr. Owen, the SDM of this place surrounded the Congress office with 500 policemen. Vishnusharan Dublith was beaten with iron rods. he was arrested and was sentenced to a fifteen-month rigorous imprisonment.

Mahashay Pyarelal started Satyagraha in Hapur on 20 January. The owners of the firms of cloth merchants were summoned and the local cloth traders were made to fill a promise form that they would not sell any foreign cloth. Only two traders - Mazhar Hussein and Lala Gangasharan refused to sign these promises.¹²¹ The police arrested him on 29 January on the accusation of sitting (dharna) before these shops. He was sentenced to 8-month rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 50. A complete strike was observed on 30 January in the honour of the leaders.¹²²

The Meerut Bar Association criticized the police repression severely.¹²³ The enthusiasm for the Satyagraha did not diminish any bit. Te volunteers continued to be recruited and demonstrations were being held at different places in the district. It was mentioned in the police secret report that a Manohar Brahman of Meerut recruited 44 volunteers at Garh Mukteswar. The recruitment drives were running enthusiastically in Sardhana, Mawana and Parikshit Garh also. In dhola Village under Baghpat circle, Onkar Nath and Atmaram recruited 100 volunteers in one day.¹²⁴ The volunteers took out a procession in Hapur on 31 January.¹²⁵

A decision was taken to set up non-cooperation panchayats at many places to hear civil cases and other matters.¹²⁶ By the end of January 1922, these organizations started to settle matters and also issued summons to journalists.

At the time when people were looking to Bardoli, an incident of burning alive policemen at Chauri Chaura took place. Looking at the incident, Gandhiji thought this was a divine warning and he immediately took back the movement.¹²⁷ The Congress Working Committee called a meeting on 11 and 12 February at Bardoli and passed a resolution to suspend all activities related to the disobedience movement.

The incidents that took place from 1919 to 1921 are very important in the history of freedom struggle. The secretary of the Meerut District Congress Committee sent a report to the provincial secretary:

"Non-cooperation has brought about a unique change in the common condition of the people. A great awakening has arisen; the number of people making self sacrifice has increased. The government lost its prestige, and there remains no hope of its retrieval. There is no fear of jail."¹²⁸

Political education started in the people of the district during this period. It created a new awakening and wave of patriotism. This period started with the announcement of the Khilafat movement, and it appeared as if the non-cooperation movement under the leadership of Gandhiji made the people of the district feel the need of self-dependence through his constructive programmes of non-cooperation. They began to realise the economic losses that they were suffering due to the use of foreign goods. They started to understand the *raison d'etre* of the foreign empire. The propagation of Swadeshi not only encouraged the spirit of self-dependence, but also inculcated national pride and self-respect. They felt attachment for native goods. This was a great achievement of this movement. The three years 1919-1921, are momentous in the annals of freedom struggle. These three years saw the extension of the national movement" quite new quarters"¹²⁹. On July 1st, 1922, Willington wrote to Vincent, "The non-cooperation movement, whatever may be its other achievements, had spread political ideas, I may say revolutionary ideas, among the masses of the people and their placid contentment has been disturbed for beyond the anticipation of the Late Secretary of state"¹³⁰. This period was probably the worst moment for Britain's imperial rulers in India in the ninety years between the revolt of 1857 and 1942.¹³¹

The Gandhian movements set in motion the wheels of national integration in the district. The movement witnessed the participation of people of all castes, religions and classes. All of them assumed the equal role of fighters in the freedom struggle. If the walls of discrimination were not abolished, they were at the least little high now. The people of the district placed the national loyalty over and above individual or regional loyalties.

The district of Meerut occupies a place of pride in the freedom struggle of Indian. The wasp and woof of the long drawn struggle was woven by a series of movements, incidents and events. All together transformed the attitude of indifference into an active participation. However, the wheels of national movement came to a halt temporarily due to internal conflicts and cracks. The bonds of Hindu-Muslim unity also became fragile and the outbreaks of communal riots weakened the superstructure of the nationalist dome. The immediate effect of suspension of the non-cooperation movement by Gahdniji evoked sharp reaction within the congress leadership. The constructive component of the Non-Cooperation movement did not attracted the people. India now presented a picture of divided house, of despondency and frustration. The students would turned to revolutionary part and to the cult of pistol and bomb. The congress to split into changers and No-changers_the former founded the Swaraj party and the latter took to constructive programme.

Gandhiji believed that the path of real freedom of India passes through the constructive programme and political movement.¹³² He conceived the freedom struggle as o chariot to be driven by two wheels- constructive programme and the political moves should revolve together. Only then a fearless, self-dependent, human society could be constructed. According to Gandhiji "Complete Swaraj can be attained only through the above constructive programme, and complete freedom can be attained by truthful and non-violent means". The constructive programmes of Gandhiji included 18 points the most important among them were: communal unity, end to untouchability, use of khadi and prohibition to drinking.

Gandhiji laid special emphasis on Hindu-Muslim Unity. The finest form of Hindu-Muslim unity appeared during the Khilafat movements. Looking at the events taking place in the nation, Gandhiji had assuredly said¹³³ that the immediate solution to the national problem lay in the Hindu-Muslim unity. By Hindu-Muslim unity is meant Swaraj, and no other question is more effective or important than this. We all desire to make our country the great and self-dependent. There are several impediments in it.¹³⁴ So the Hindus and Muslims should come together to face them together.¹³⁵ the dream of Hindu-Muslim unity of Gandhiji was severely hurt by the disintegration of the Khilafat movement and suspension of non-cooperation movement. From the very beginning of the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement, some elements in both communities looked at each other with doubt. Some Muslims thought that they are being used for serving the interests of the

Congress. The slogan of Swaraj by the Congress appeared to them the establishment of the Hindu nation on the ruins of British rule within one year.

With the coming into force the reforms of Montague-Chelmsford, the number of Hindu legislators increased, it appeared to the Muslims that Swaraj meant Hindu rule. The gap between the two communities widened. The movement¹³⁶ (purification rite) under the aegis of Arya Samaj and the high pitch of the organization made this gap unbridgeable. The shuddhi movement started in Meerut in 1923. Shuddhi meetings were held at Khekra, Baraut and Hapur. The Muslims constituted a new Khilafat committee in order to struggle against the Hindu movement.¹³⁷ Faiyaz Ahmad constituted a secret Mohammedan society in Ghaziabad, the purpose of which was to struggle against the shuddhi movement.¹³⁸ In Mawana, a provocative news item was published title 'Fate of Shraddhanand', in which the Muslims were incited to murder Shraddhanand.,¹³⁹ The Hindu-Muslim enmity increased and several explosions took place in July 1923 due to communal tension.¹⁴⁰ The Hindu-Muslim enmity became a matter of discussion in local and national newspapers. The Pioneer, commenting upon the Meerut riots, described Hindu-Muslim Unity such extrovert unity which was incapable of facing any type of tension. The Hindu press accused Muslims for the whole problem, and wrote that there was no place in India where Hindus were not being tormented by Muslims. The Muslims were ready to fight to finish the Hindu nation.¹⁴¹

Meerut Nagar Palika passed a resolution in which communal riots were regretted and sympathy for the innocent people victimized by the communal riots, was expressed.¹⁴² Depreciation in communal harmony made the congress much worried. The fourth Delhi political provincial conference was held in Meerut on 7 and 8 March, 1924. The chief topic in the conference was how to re-establish communal goodwill. The chairman, Asif ali, criticized communal riots in open terms and put forward logic in support of unity. Maulana Shaukat Ali and Dr. Mahamood of Patna also appealed to the people to maintain communal harmony, but the Muslims did not join the conference in expected numbers.¹⁴³ Swami Shraddhanand arrived in Meerut in April 1924 in order to provide momentum to the peace movement. It spread tension in two communities. The Muslims organized the Tabliak and Tanzeem movements in its opposition. The members of the Jamayat-e-Ulema toured the district in order to provoke Muslims against Hindus. Fazluddin came from Lahore to Meerut to appeal to Muslims to boycott Hindu shops.¹⁴⁴ Consequent to these provoking activities and polluted propaganda, communal riots and tension occurred at many places in the district.

The political leaders struggled to diminish the effect of Shuddhi and Tablik movements, but hardly any success could be achieved. Swaraj was impossible without unity. This statement had some effect. When communal harmony could not be established in any way, Gandhiji thought of Amaran Anshan (fast unto death). Announcing his decision to fast unto death, Gandhiji said, "I am enforcing this Anshan on myself because I have the honour to invite the members of all communities to come together and settle the issues". On the sixth day of the Anshan, he wrote an article, which he ended saying that if people establish Hindu-Muslim unity, get rid of unouchability, adopt charkha and khadi, then they can see that they get everything by itself.¹⁴⁵ The fast of Gandhiji stung the conscience of both communities deeply. The Congress called a meeting on 24 September at Town Hall in which many speeches were made for harmony and unity.¹⁴⁶ The meeting was chaired by the chairman of Nagar Palika, Nawab Khan Bahadur Safullah Khan.¹⁴⁷ Gangadutt Pandey sang Bande mataram in the meeting. Mohammad Aslam Saifi advocated in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity and prayed for the success of Gandhiji's efforts in this direction. On 9 October, another meeting was called at Town Hall under the chairmanship of Ch. Raghuvir Narayan Singh in order to celebrate the Unity Day. Pyarelal Sharma placed the proposal for unity and it was approved unanimously.¹⁴⁸ A resolution passed in MeerutNagar Palika to congratulate and offer good wishes to Gandhiji on the successful end to 21 day ordeal of fast. Mahatma Gandhi could cool down the fire of communal disharmony for some time.¹⁴⁹ The year 1925 changed into 1926 without having diminished Hindu-Muslim tension; the propagators of Shudhi and Taflig continued with their activities and they accused each other.¹⁵⁰ In this background, a criminal incident took place in the form of murder of Swami Shraddhanand.¹⁵¹ The murderers belonged to Meerut. The riots once again flared up on 16 May, 1927. All-out efforts of the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi could play no role in melting the stonehearted people. Still Gandhiji's efforts continued for harmony.

AfterRowlatt Satyagrah, the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movement an epoch-making event in national movement and Gandhian politics. It became clear that the days of class politics are over, and its place was substituted by Mass politics. The British imperialism and Indian nationalism confronted each other in an unprecedented manner. The movement also revealed both the positive and negative sides of the national movement. On the positive side was the spectacle of the great consciousness and awakening. It percolated from the urban centres to rural India, from Elite and middle classes to peasantry and working classes. The national movement for the first time possessed

a socio-economic perspective inherent in Gandhian programme of Hindu-Muslim unity, Harijan uplift, Swadeshi and Prohibition. On the negative side, the national movement suffered a serious jolt as the fissures developed in the Hindu-Muslim unity plank. It gave rise to internecine quarrels, communal tension and rioting and resultant reactionary movements such as Suddhi, Tabliq and Tanzim. The fissures developed in the congress party itself as Swarajists broke away under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das leaving the No-Changers to follow Gandhian programme of constructive movement. The post Non-Cooperation period saw the rise and growth of Swadeshi, Khadi and Harijan uplift etc. movements, though less spectacular, but no less significant in denting the exploitative dome of economic imperialism.

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