

ROLE OF STUDENT REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT IN UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) became a turning point in the history of the Indian freedom struggle as it turned into a mass movement with the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Uttar Pradesh (then called United Provinces of Agra and Oudh) became a key hub of nationalist mobilization. Students were one of the most active and powerful social groups which took part in the movement. This paper looks at the role played by student revolutionaries in Uttar Pradesh during the Non-Cooperation Movement, especially their role in educational boycotts, political mobilization, and spreading nationalist and revolutionary ideas. The paper contends that student activism not only enhanced the Gandhian non-cooperation, but also provided a way forward to revolutionary nationalism, particularly after the suspension of the movement in 1922. Basing on the secondary sources, the paper brings out the duality of students in terms of them being non-violent activists and a new breed of revolutionaries hence their importance in defining the course of the freedom struggle in India.

Keywords: Non-Cooperation Movement, Students, Uttar Pradesh, Revolutionary nationalism, Youth politics, freedom struggle.

1. INTRODUCTION

The first half of the twentieth century was a decade of radical change in the Indian national movement. Nationalist politics in India were mostly limited to elite groups until the First World War, when they tried to use constitutional means to demand reforms by the British colonial state (Chandra *et al.*, 2016). The advent of mass politics after 1919 was however a major departure with this approach.

The first organized effort to mobilize the masses nationally using non-violent resistance was the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922), headed by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi approach included

boycotting of the government schools, courts and foreign goods, encouraging Swadeshi and local institutions, and non-cooperation with colonial institutions (Sarkar, 1983).

The state of Uttar Pradesh (then the United Provinces) was at the centre of this change. It was also not only politically important, but also a socially diverse region with a high representation of urban middle classes and rural peasantry. Important centres of nationalist activity were cities like Allahabad, Banaras and Lucknow.

It is in this larger context that students became a strong movement force. Their involvement was not symbolic only but active political engagement, organization and spreading of ideologies. Students also had a significant role in the reconciliation of the difference between the Gandhian non-violence and revolutionary nationalism.

This essay attempts to examine the complex position of student revolutionaries in Uttar Pradesh during Non-Cooperation Movement. It explores their relationships, inspirations and ideological leanings as well as evaluating their influence in the overall freedom struggle.

2. SOCIAL-POLITICAL CONTEXT AND HISTORY.

In order to know the role of students, it is necessary to explore the socio-political conditions under which the Non-Cooperation Movement had taken place. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, elite groups of people (landlords, professionals and educated urban classes) remained the dominant political actors in Uttar Pradesh (Gupta, 2010).

Nevertheless, there are a number of processes that led to the emergence of mass nationalism. Politicization of the Indian society was caused by the partition of Bengal in 1905, Swadeshi movement, the Home Rule Movement and the influence of the World War I (Sarkar, 1983). Also, there was an overall dissatisfaction in the populace due to economic difficulties, increase in prices, and agrarian distresses.

The anti-colonial feelings were further fuelled by peasant movements and local protests in Uttar Pradesh. Reeves (1966) pointed out that the Non-Cooperation Movement in the United Provinces was even in many cases more of a general social movement, one that comprised political protest and agrarian unrest.

Resentment towards British rule was further fuelled by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 and repressive Rowlatt Act (Chandra *et al.*, 2016). Such happenings provided a favorable atmosphere to mass mobilization.

Historians like Gyanendra Pandey (2007) have noted that this was a time when the Indian National Congress changed to a mass based organization. The students were a critical part of this change, as they actively engaged in political affairs and disseminated the ideas of nationalism.

3. TEACHING BOYCOTT AND EMERGENCE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

3.1 The boycott of Colonial Education was carried out in

Boycotting of the government educational institutions was one of the most important features of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhi thought that colonial education was only meant to create loyal subjects and not independent minds (Sarkar, 1983).

Students in Uttar Pradesh in response to his call pulled out of government schools and colleges in large numbers. This was not just a break to the colonial education system but also a symbol of defiance to the British authority (Chandra *et al.*, 2016).

The boycott had wide ramifications. It not only placed a crisis on the colonial education system but also paved the way to other educational institutions.

3.2 Development of National Educational Institutions.

The dropout of students resulted in the formation of national institutions like Kashi Vidyapith and Jamia Millia Islamia.

The purpose of these institutions was to offer education based on the Indian culture, self-sufficiency, and nationalism (Verma, 2017). They were also the hubs of political activism and students were urged to get involved in the struggle of freedom.

In these institutions students were not just trained in an academic way but also ideologically. Nationalist literature, political discussions, and social reforms exposed them to these, and this influenced their future as leaders.

4. STUDENTS: POLITICAL MOBILIZATION.

During the Non-Cooperation Movement, students were instrumental in activating the masses and coordinating the political activities. They were good participants due to their youth, enthusiasm, and commitment.

They held mass meetings, procession, and demonstrations both in the urban and rural regions (Pandey, 1975). Students used to be volunteers on campaigns in the Congress where they would organize and maintain order.

Their functions were not confined to the urban centres. Students went to the rural regions to propagate the message about the movement and mobilize peasants. Such an outreach played a key role in transforming the movement into mass (Reeves, 1966).

Pamphlets, speeches, and local meetings were other ways in which students helped spread nationalist ideas. They were useful agents of political education as they were able to communicate with various audiences.

5. POSITIVE PROGRAMMES AND SOCIAL CHANGE.

Along with political mobilization, students were also engaged in the activity of Gandhian constructive programmes. These programmes were meant to create an independent society that will not rely on the colonial rule.

Students advocated the utilization of Swadeshi products and boycotting of foreign products. The khadi spinning turned into a symbol of economic autonomy and nationalism (Sarkar, 1983).

They were also involved in social reforms including encouraging communal peace, literacy and upliftment of the rural people. These campaigns were the manifestation of the idea of a holistic movement that was a synthesis of political resistance and social transformation as envisaged by Gandhi.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY DISPOSITIONS AMONG THE STUDENTS.

6.1 Disillusionment following the Chauri Chaura Incident.

Student activists were deeply affected by the suspension of the movement in the wake of the Chauri Chaura incident. The sudden withdrawal disappointed many of the students who had actively participated in the movement (Sarkar, 1983).

This disappointment caused other students to doubt the efficiency of non-violence and consider other options of resistance (Agarwal, 2021).

6.2 Influence of Revolutionary Leaders

Students in Uttar Pradesh were inspired by leaders like Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan, and Chandrashekhar Azad, who were revolutionary leaders.

These leaders belonged to such organizations as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, which aimed to topple the British rule with the help of armed struggle (Agarwal, 2021).

One of the crucial factors that influenced the formation of student consciousness was the ideological power of Bhagat Singh, especially his accent on socialism and anti-imperialism (Kiran, 2021).

6.3 Revolutionary Networks Growth.

The involvement of students led to the growth of the revolutionary circles in Uttar Pradesh. Educational institutions turned into the centres of the exchange of the ideas and recruitment in the revolutionary organizations.

Political activism and the exposure to ideologies produced a generation of students who were ready to embrace radical ways when it came to fighting the independence battle.

7. BI-POLAR IDEOLOGICAL WORK OF STUDENTS.

A key characteristic of student involvement during the Non-Cooperation Movement was that they were dual ideologically oriented. Whereas a large number of the students stuck to the Gandhian non-violence, a few were attracted to revolutionary nationalism.

This two-sidedness is a mirror of the Indian national movement. Students did not have to follow only one ideological system but experience many different points of view (Chandra *et al.*, 2016).

The peaceful and radical style of operation led to the dynamism of the movement and enabled it to keep up with the changing situation.

8. Regional Dissemination and Grassroot Effect.

Student activism spread throughout Uttar Pradesh not only to big urban centres but also to smaller towns and rural locations. Students served as the mediators between the political elites and the common people, and they transformed the ideas of nationalism into the local arenas (Gupta, 2010).

They played a special role in the mobilization of peasants and rural communities. Students contributed to expansion of the social base of the movement through organizing local protests and promoting awareness (Reeves, 1966).

Such grassroots participation was vital in making the Non-Cooperation Movement a genuine mass-based movement.

9. IMPACT AND LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE

9.1 Movement Growth.

The involvement of students greatly increased the scope of the Non-Cooperation Movement both geographically and socially (Pandey, 1975).

9.2 Weakening of Colonial Authority.

Active involvement in protests and boycotts of learning institutions weakened the status of the colonial rule (Sarkar, 1983).

9.3 Foundation for Future Movements

The lessons learned by the students throughout this movement equipped them to take part in the subsequent movements like the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement (Pandey, 2007).

10. CONCLUSION

Student revolutionaries played a very crucial role in the Non-Cooperation Movement in Uttar Pradesh. Not only did students make Gandhian non-cooperation to succeed but also made a critical contribution to the rise of revolutionary nationalism.

Their dual involvement in non-violent and revolutionary ideologies reflects the dynamic aspect of youth involvement in the Indian freedom struggle. Students that crossed the divide between various ideological streams added depth to the movement and made it more powerful.

The history of these student revolutionaries gives hope to those movements of justice, democracy, and social change that are still going on today.

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