



The Making of a Nation

Indian Nationalism & The Visions of Swaraj (1915–1934)

AN ANALYTICAL BREAKDOWN OF THE ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE, THE EVOLUTION FROM NON-COOPERATION TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, AND THE COMPLEX SOCIAL TAPESTRY OF EARLY 20TH-CENTURY INDIA.

The Catalysts of Discontent

Catalyst Chain

Economic Shock (1913–1921)

Metric: Prices doubled between 1913-1918.

Impact: Forced army recruitment in villages; crop failures (1918-1921).

Human Toll: 12 to 13 million perished from famines and the influenza epidemic.

Political Repression (1919)

Event: The Rowlatt Act is hurriedly passed.

Action: Allowed detention of political prisoners without trial for two years.

Reaction: Rallies, railway strikes, and shop closures.

State Violence (April 13, 1919)



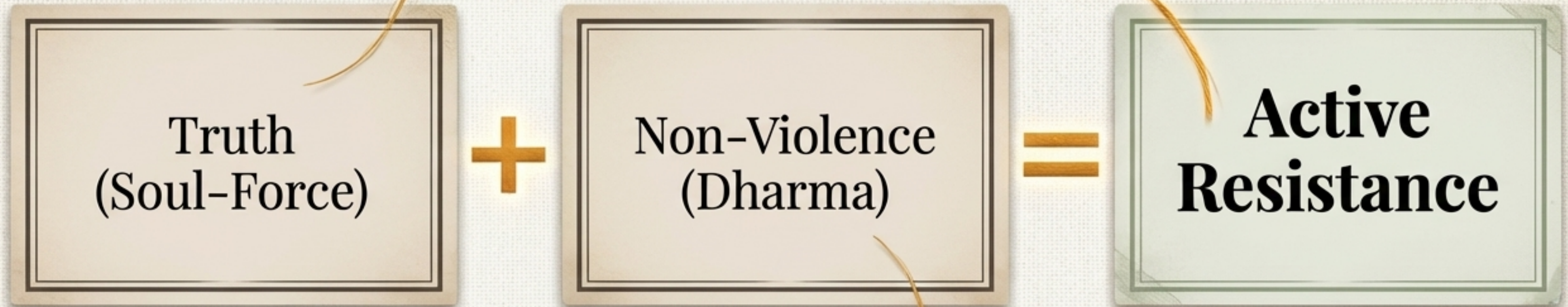
Event: Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.

Action: General Dyer blocks exits and fires on a peaceful crowd attending the Baisakhi fair to "produce a moral effect".

Outcome: Widespread strikes, attacks on government buildings, and brutal, humiliating police retaliation.

The Weapon of the Strong

Concept Points



The very substance of the soul... if the cause was true, physical force was not necessary to fight the oppressor.

Dispelling the myth of the weak. This power is not passive resistance; indeed it calls for intense activity.

Not seeking vengeance. Appealing to the conscience of the oppressor rather than forcing them.

Phase 1: The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922)



The Strategy of Non-Cooperation

Thesis: British rule only survives through Indian cooperation (per Hind Swaraj, 1909).

Stage 1: Surrender of government-awarded titles.

Stage 2: Boycott of civil services, army, police, courts, and schools.

Stage 3: Economic boycott.

Import of foreign cloth halved 1921-1922, value dropping from Rs 102 crore to Rs 57 crore.

The Khilafat Alliance (1920)

Context: Defeat of Ottoman Turkey in WWI; fears for the Khalifa's temporal powers.

The Alliance: Gandhi unites with young Muslim leaders Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali to bring Muslims under the umbrella of a unified national movement.

Congress

Khilafat



Fractured Visions of Swaraj

Swaraj (freedom) was a fluid concept, interpreted radically differently based on local grievances.

Social Group	Core Grievance	Method of Protest	Definition of Swaraj
The Middle Class (Towns)	British institutional dominance.	Boycotting foreign goods, picketing liquor shops, leaving government schools and courts.	Economic and administrative self-reliance (though limited by the high cost of Khadi).
Peasants (Awadh)	Talukdars exacting high rents and forced labor (begar).	Nai-dhobi bandhs (social boycotts), looting bazaars, led by Baba Ramchandra and Oudh Kisan Sabha.	Redistribution of land, abolition of begar, and an end to oppressive landlordism.
Tribal Peasants (Gudem Hills)	Enclosure of forest areas, denying grazing and foraging rights.	Militant guerrilla warfare led by Alluri Sitaram Raju (blending Gandhian ideals with armed force).	Restoration of traditional forest rights and liberation by force.
Plantation Workers (Assam)	Inland Emigration Act of 1859, preventing them from leaving tea gardens.	Defying authorities and fleeing toward their home villages.	'Gandhi Raj' – the freedom to move freely and receive land in their native villages.

The Interlude & The Pivot



The Escalation Staircase

The Trough (Feb 1922)

Violence at Chauri Chaura.
Action: Gandhi abruptly halts the Non-Cooperation movement.
Result: Internal division. Swaraj Party argues for council politics; young radicals push for mass agitation.

The Simon Commission (1928)

A British-only statutory commission arrives to review constitutional reform. Greeted with unified 'Go back Simon' protests.

Vague Promises (Oct 1929)

Viceroy Irwin offers an unspecified 'dominion status' and a Round Table Conference. Radicals are unsatisfied.

Purna Swaraj (Dec 1929)

The Lahore Congress formalizes the demand for Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence). 26 January 1930 is declared Independence Day, requiring a concrete issue to mobilize the masses.

1928

1929

The Salt Catalyst

Why Salt?

Consumed by rich and poor alike; an essential item of food. The tax and government monopoly revealed the 'most oppressive face of British rule'.

The Ultimatum

11 demands sent to Viceroy Irwin on Jan 31, 1930. Irwin refuses to negotiate.

The Shift: This act transitions the struggle from refusing cooperation to actively breaking colonial laws.

Journey Map

Start:
Sabarmati
Ashram

Core Team:
78
volunteers

Distance:
240 miles

Pace:
24 days
(10 miles/day)

End:
Dandi (April
6) - Boiling
seawater



Phase 2: Civil Disobedience (1930-1934)

Civil Disobedience Movement



The Missing Strands

Industrial workers and poor peasants largely stayed aloof due to Congress's reluctance to alienate industrialists and rich landlords.

Rich Peasant Communities (Patidars & Jats)

- Motivation: Hard hit by the 1930 trade depression; fighting against high revenue demands.
- Limitation: Deeply disappointed when movement called off in 1931 without revenue revisions; refused to rejoin in 1932.

Business Classes (FICCI)

- Motivation: Wanted protection from imports and end to colonial restrictions. Supported with finances.
- Limitation: Grew apprehensive of militant activities, disruption, and rising socialist influence.

Women

- Motivation: Large-scale participation in protests, salt manufacturing. Saw service as a 'sacred duty'.
- Limitation: Congress was reluctant to grant women authority, keeping presence largely symbolic.

The Two Movements Compared

	Phase 1: Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922)	Phase 2: Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–1934)
Primary Strategy	Refusing to cooperate with British institutions (boycotts, surrendering titles).	Actively breaking colonial laws (manufacturing salt, violating forest laws, refusing taxes).
Unifying Symbol	Khadi (homespun cloth) & The Charkha.	Salt (the breaking of the salt monopoly).
Key Alliances	Strong Hindu-Muslim unity via the Khilafat Committee.	High participation from business classes, rich peasants, and women; visible fracturing of communal unity.
Reason for Withdrawal	Unplanned violence by protestors (Chauri Chaura, 1922).	Extreme state repression (100,000 arrested) leading to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931).

Synthesis: The Limits of Unity



The Limits of Unity

The anti-colonial struggle forged a collective identity, but deep structural fractures remained unresolved.

Fraying Thread 1: The Dalit Struggle

Context: Long ignored by Congress fearing conservative high-caste backlash.

The Conflict: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar demands a separate electorate. Gandhi fasts unto death, fearing it will halt social integration.

Resolution: The Poona Pact (1932) grants reserved seats, but apprehension toward Congress remains.

Fraying Thread 2: Alienation of Minorities

Context: Post-Khilafat, Congress visibly associates with Hindu nationalist groups.

The Conflict: Distrust deepens. Muslim League attempts compromise on representation but fails (1928).

Ideological Shift: By 1930, Sir Muhammad Iqbal articulates the need for separate electorates to protect minority culture, laying groundwork for future divisions.

Nationalism captured the imagination, but the definition of the 'nation' itself remained fiercely contested.