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Chapter- 2 

Nationalism in India

**Study Notes**

**Introduction**

• Modern nationalism was associated with the

formation of nation-states.

• In India like many other colonies, the growth of modern nationalism is connected to the anti-colonial movement. 

**The First World War, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation**

• The First World War (1914-1918) created a new political and economic situation.

• India faced various problems during war period:

→ Increase in defence expenditure.

→ Prices increased through the war years.

→ Forced recruitment in rural areas.

• During 1918-19 and 1920-21, crops failure in many parts of India. • Hardships did not end after the war was over. 

**The Idea of Satyagraha**

• Satyagraha is a novel way of fighting the 

colonial rule in India.

→ It is a non-aggressive, peaceful mass agitation against oppression and injustice. • Satyagraha means insistence on truth.

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• It is a moral force, not passive resistance.

• In January 1915, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India.

• Gandhiji organized Satyagraha Movements in Champaran, Bihar (1916), Kheda district of Gujarat (1917) and amongst cotton mill workers in Ahmedabad (1918).

**The Rowlatt Act (1919)** 

• This act gave the government enormous powers to repress political activities and allowed detention of political prisoners without 

trial for two years.

Jallianwala Bagh massacre

• On 13th April 1919, a huge crowd gathered in the

enclosed ground of Jallianwala Bagh. 

• Dyer entered the area, blocked the exit points, and opened fire on the crowd, killing hundreds.

• As the news spread, strikes, clashes with the police and attacks on government buildings started.

• The government responded with brutal repression.

• Gandhi called off the Rowlatt satyagraha as the violence spread. **Khilafat Movement**

• Khilafat Movement was led by two brothers Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali.

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• Khilafat Committee was formed in Bombay in March 1919 to defend the Khalifa’s temporal powers.

• Gandhiji convinced the Congress to join hands with the Khilafat Movement and start a Non-Cooperation Campaign for Swaraj.

• At the Congress session at Nagpur in December 1920, the Non-Cooperation programme was adopted.

**Differing strands within the movement** 

• The Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement began in January 1921. **The Movement in the Towns**

• It started with middle class participation in cities.

• Students, teachers, lawyers gave up studies, jobs, legal practices and joined movements.

• Council elections were boycotted.

• Foreign goods were boycotted.

• Liquor shops were picketed.

**Movement in the countryside**

• Peasants and tribals took over the struggle which turned violent gradually. Peasant Movement in Awadh

• The peasants were led by Baba Ramchandra in Awadh against landlords and

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talukdars. 

• In 1920, the Oudh Kisan Sabha was set up

headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba

Ramchandra and a few others.

Movement of Tribals in Andhra Pradesh

• Alluri Sitaram Raju led the guerrilla warfare in the Gudem Hills of Andhra Pradesh. 

• The rebels attacked police stations.

• Raju was captured and executed in 1924.

Swaraj in the Plantations

• For the plantation workers, Swaraj means moving freely.

• They protested against the Inland Emigration Act (1859) which prevented them from leaving the plantation without permission.

• Each group interpreted the term swaraj in their own ways.

**Towards Civil Disobedience**

• In February 1922, Mahatma Gandhi decided to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement.

• Many leaders such as C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party within the Congress to argue for a return to council politics.

• Younger leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose pressed for

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more radical mass agitation and for full independence.

Factors that shaped Indian politics towards the late 1920s

• The Worldwide Economic Depression

→ Agricultural prices collapsed after 1930 as the demand for agricultural goods fell and exports declined.

• Simon Commission 

→ It was constituted by the Tory government of Britain to look into the demands of the nationalists and suggest changes in the constitutional structure of India. → The Commission arrived in India in 1928.

→ The Congress protested against this commission.

• In December, 1929, under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Lahore session of Congress formalized the demand of “Purna Swaraj”.

**The Salt March and the Civil Disobedience Movement**

• Gandhiji chose salt as the medium that could unite the 

nation as it is consumed by all the sections of the society.

**Salt March**

• Salt or Dandi March began on March 12, 1930.

→ On 6th April 1930, Gandhiji reached Dandi, a village in Gujarat and broke the Salt Law by boiling water and manufacturing salt.

→ Thus, it began the Civil Disobedience Movement.

• It was different from Non-Cooperation Movement as people were now asked not only to refuse cooperation but also to break colonial laws.

• Boycott of foreign goods, non-payment of taxes, breaking forest laws were its

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main features.

• The British Government followed a policy of brutal repression. • British government arrested all the leaders including Gandhiji and Nehru. • Mahatma Gandhi called off the movement.

Gandhi-Irwin Pact 

• On 5 March, 1931, Lord Irwin, the 

Viceroy, signed a pact with Gandhi.

• In December, 1931, Gandhiji went to

London for the Second Round Table

Conference but returned disappointed.

• Gandhiji relaunched the Civil Disobedience Movement but by 1934 it lost its momentum.

**How Participants saw the Movement**

Rich peasants

• Rich peasant communities expected the revenue tax to be reduced, when the British refused to do so, they did join the movement.

→ They did not rejoin the movement as the movement was called without revising the revenue rates.

Poor Peasants

• The poor peasants wanted rents of lands to be remitted.

→ The Congress was unwilling to support the “no rent” campaigns due to the fear

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of upsetting the rich peasants and landlords.

Business Classes

• After the war, their huge profits were reduced, wanted protection against import of foreign goods.

→ The spread of militant activities, worries of prolonged business disruptions, growing influences of socialism amongst the young Congress forced them not to join the movement. 

Women

• Women also participated in protest marches, manufactured salt, and picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops.

→ Congress was reluctant to allow women to hold any position of authority within the organization.

**Limits of Civil Disobedience**

• The Dalits or the Untouchables did not actively participate in the movement; they demanded reservation of seats, separate electorates.

• Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the 

Dalits, formed an association in 1930,

called the Depressed Classes

Association.

• He clashed with Gandhiji.

• Poona Pact between the Gandhiji and B.R. Ambedkar (1932) gave reserved seats in Provincial and Central Councils but were voted by general electorate.

• The leader of the Muslim League M. A. Jinnah wanted reserved seats for

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Muslims in Central Assembly.

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→ Large sections of Muslims did not participate in the Civil 

disobedience movement.

**The Sense of Collective Belonging**

• The sense of collective belonging came partly through the

experience of united struggles.

• History and fiction, folklore and songs, popular prints and 

symbols, all played a part in the making of nationalism.

• By 1921, Gandhiji had designed the Swaraj flag. It was again a tricolour (red, green and white) and had a spinning wheel in the centre.

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