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## Ideological Foundations of the Non-Cooperation Movement: Gandhi, Non-Violence, and the Concept of Swaraj

**Dr. Sanjay Kumar Sahni**

*Assistant Professor, Department Of History, Sub Divisional Government Degree College, Benipur*

*Email-i'd- [sksahni10111983@gmail.com](mailto:sksahni10111983@gmail.com)*

### Abstract

This paper examines the ideological architecture of India's Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–22), foregrounding Gandhi's leadership, the ethic of ahimsa (non-violence), and the goal of Swaraj (self-rule). It situates the campaign in its immediate context—post-Rowlatt Act repression and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre—arguing that Gandhi transformed scattered discontent into a disciplined, mass-based politics that delegitimized colonial authority without recourse to force. Conceptually, ahimsa is treated not as passive abstention but as an active method—satyagraha—that integrates moral restraint with collective action, enabling broad participation while seeking conversion rather than coercion of opponents. The analysis traces how Swaraj functioned both as ethical self-mastery and as a constitutional horizon, informing Congress strategies of boycott, resignation from councils, and constructive work. The paper also maps the social breadth of mobilization—peasants, workers, students, and especially women and youth—and explores organizational shifts within the Indian National Congress that reoriented an elite forum into a popular vehicle. Critiques are addressed, including intra-Congress dissent, communal tensions, and the suspension after Chauri Chaura, to assess limits and unintended effects. Finally, the study appraises legacies: consolidation of mass nationalism, reinforcement of local self-governance imaginaries, and a transnational afterlife in civil-rights and anti-apartheid struggles. It concludes that the Movement's enduring significance lies in pairing ethical means with political ends, establishing a repertoire that reshaped both Indian nationalism and global repertoires of non-violent contention.

**Keywords:** Non-Cooperation Movement; Gandhi; Ahimsa; Swaraj; Mass mobilization; Indian National Congress.

### Introduction

In 1920, the Non-Cooperation Movement emerged as a significant phase in India's struggle against British colonial rule. The Indian National Congress launched the campaign as an endorsement of Mahatma Gandhi's call for non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. The preamble, crafted by Gandhi, established an ideological framework based on the principles of ahimsa (non-violence) and the attainment of Swaraj, or self-governance. Following the Second World War and the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Indian people pledged total opposition to the British government. The movement aimed to "wake the people from the death-like slumber to which...subjection and the apathy of a long numbed intelligence

had...reduced them". The Indian National Congress and other organizations urged the population to withdraw cooperation from British institutions, thereby destabilizing the colonial regime. While thousands of Indians participated at the grassroots level, including women and youth, the leadership remained predominantly rooted in the traditional elite. The following study examines the ideological basis of the Non-Cooperation Movement, addressing Gandhi's role in as the initiator of this approach, the centrality of ahimsa as a justified method within the campaign, and the concept of Swaraj as a guiding objective. The analysis considers the foundational ideas articulated during the movement and explores its broader significance as a landmark in modern Indian history.

## **Historical Context of the Non-Cooperation Movement**

The Non-Cooperation Movement launched by the Indian National Congress in 1920 marked a decisive turning point in the history of the Indian independence struggle. By expanding the sphere of political action by involving the masses, the movement marked the first attempt at a mass mobilisation of the people. It captured the imagination of the east, contributing to the success of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

It was the first great all-encompassing display of non-violent resistance on such a massive scale. It was the first expression of political consciousness in India in which women and youth played a critical role. Gandhi's ability to attract millions of people was closely related both to the idea of non-violent protest and the vision of Swaraj (or self-rule) that imbued the non-cooperation movement with a deeper meaning and wider political focus.

## **Mahatma Gandhi: Life and Ideology**

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known predominantly as Mahatma Gandhi, the "great soul," was not merely an activist; he was one of the twentieth century's towering political figures and thinkers. His name now symbolizes a universal philosophy, and his methods of revolutionary struggle have inspired the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Aung San Suu Kyi. Beginning his career in South African legal contests, he returned to India in 1915 to lead the movement toward national independence that culminated in 1947's emancipation from foreign rule. But Gandhi was more than the leader of the Indian National Congress and the Non-Cooperation Movement initiated after the Amritsar massacre and the Rowlatt Acts's passage in 1919. He was also a thinker-poet who turned his life into a work of art that, through nonviolent methods, shaped the destiny of India. Gandhi's origin as a collaborator among Section-holders within the Indian National Congress is well documented. And so too is the simple explanation that his earlier strategy was non-violence; his later, more rigorous strategy was still non-violent but self-referent. Yet the implication, the precise way in which this fundamental element of ideology shaped the movement, remains elusive.

### **(a) Early Influences on Gandhi**

The Non-Cooperation Movement drew strength from Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's concept of non-violence. The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed a gradual breakdown of the racial system. Indian opinion matured and Indian National Congress leadership passed into the hands of younger man led the Movement. Many of the Congressmen who had formed the earlier Munity began to see the poverty of their appeal. They realized that the masses, which is the basis of all political power, were not yet involved in the struggle for independence, and that the initial success of the Non-Cooperation movement was largely due to mass participation, women and youths included.

The Hindu ideal of non-violence which had inspired Mahatma Gandhi during his South African experience and possession of a democratic, spiritual and ethical element had suggested its application in the political field. It appears inevitable that it should have influenced Gandhi. Yet the principle of non-violence is not merely a philosophical or theological maxim; it is a vital part of Indian life, a permanent constituent of the Indian consciousness. It is difficult to

assess what may have been the inspiration behind such philosophy; yet it may be stated that neither his upbringing nor his keen political insight has been enough to account for the formation of such a peculiar product, so durable, that it could survive the test of time and become so impeccable, in the eyes of the whole world.

### **(b) Gandhi's Vision of Swaraj**

"Swaraj" is a complex term denoting both moral self-restraint and self-government or non-rule, the latter signifying not the absence of authority but a condition in which governance becomes the people's function. Gandhi often employed "Swaraj" to describe the paramount goal of the nationalist movement. In 1928, the Nehru Report—drafted as a response to the Simon Commission's exclusion of Indian members—asserted that "Swaraj could only be achieved if Indians were given a responsible government under the Statute of Westminster, 1931". The Indian National Congress, therefore, adopted a resolution in 1929 stipulating that Dominion Status was a mere interim phase, with complete non-colonial Independence as the ultimate goal. Gandhi himself defined Swaraj as 'self-rule'.

### **Philosophy of Non-Violence**

The philosophy underpinning the Non-Cooperation Movement was the doctrine of ahimsa, or non-violence. It embodies both an ethical principle of respect for life and an active political method for confronting injustice. Gandhi articulated ahimsa as a means to coordinate mind, body, and speech in disciplined action; it functions as a dynamic force, not merely the abstention from violence in deed. As such, it aims not only at reforming behaviour but at transforming relations between oppressors and the oppressed through deliberate mass mobilization. The political efficacy of ahimsa therefore derives from its capacity to energize ordinary people to participate collectively in struggles for justice, liberty, and self-rule. The concept owes much to Hindu spiritual traditions, which emphasize self-purification as a prerequisite for action, and guided Gandhi's moral and political leadership throughout the campaign.

#### **(a) Conceptual Underpinnings of Ahimsa**

Gandhi's non-violent resistance expressed the principle of ahimsa: "non-injury, non-violence." The concept condemns violence in all its manifestations, including the violent actions of terrorists and insurgents, the use of physical force in punishment, and even the violence of hunger on the poor. Gandhi refused to selectively apply the precept, insisting on a strict observance of ahimsa in its widest meaning. His movement was based on principles of ahimsa and satyagraha, a spirit of disobedient compliance in which mind, body, and speech are integrated in a course of action that refuses to recognize the legitimacy of an offender. If the approach seems paradoxical, it is because it is so. The confrontation involved in maintaining a protest against a many-layered system of imperial rule can only be justified under duress. In the case of a radical approach to a long-known problem, the motivation cannot be other than moral; a party that insists on the prerogatives of morality must stand by its principles.

#### **(b) Non-Violence as a Political Strategy**

The Non-Cooperation Movement inaugurated a new phase of Indian political nationalism by providing an alternative modality of social control and conflict resolution rooted in Gandhian philosophy and the practice of unyielding non-violence. The strategy empowered the Indian National Congress to mobilize an enormously expanded array of constituents from all sectors of Indian society, with women and youth in particular assuming critical roles in the mass movement. Since its inception in the second decade of the 20th century, the politics and philosophy of non-violence had consistently engaged with key questions of modern Indian political theory: What type of colonial society did India aspire to become, what practices and institutions would underpin that society, and how would the means of contesting colonial rule suit and reinforce the desired system of social and political organization. The theory of self-rule known as swaraj depended upon the successful deployment of non-violent methods

of negotiation, coercion and discipline in order to restrain the activities both of the colonial state and of established nationalist organizations within the political field that risked infringing the territory of popular sovereignty.

## **The Role of the Indian National Congress**

The Indian National Congress served as an institutional framework for the non-cooperation struggle, facilitating mass participation and territorial expansion of the nationalist movement. In 1919, a conference was held in Bombay (Mumbai) to prepare for the session of the All-India Congress Committee. The Congress years and the shift of power to younger leaders played a crucial role in the transition.

### **(a) Shift in Leadership and Strategy**

The Indian National Congress played a vital role in the Non-Cooperation Movement due to its leadership, widespread popularity, and responsible approach. Its adaptability allowed it to remain relevant during turbulent times such as the Great War and the Rowlatt Act's passage. At the time of the Rowlatt Act's enactment, the Congress, with Gandhi's backing, resolved to organize nationwide protests. Supported by prominent Nationalists like Bipin Chandra Pal and Dadabhai Nauroji, the Congress asserted its dominance over revolutionary figures such as Bhai Parmanand. Subsequently, it shifted from an elitist entity to a mass-based organization, as the government's passive stance against nationalist initiatives emboldened public participation. Following the emergence of Gandhi and his nationwide outreach, the Congress made the remarkable decision to forgo conventional leadership and transfer authority to others who could mobilize the masses more effectively.

### **(b) Congress and the Masses**

Gandhi's leadership secured the endorsement of the Congress for the Non-Cooperation Movement that was launched in September 1920. The limited political gain that resulted remained secondary to the far-reaching significance of the event, since the Congress leadership became consciously identified with mass mobilisation for the first time and the crucial element of well-organised political violence was firmly rejected by the principal leaders, though it was retained in practice by local groups. The movement created an unprecedented demand for independence and elation over a call to 'absolute independence', and the Indian masses became politically conscious to an extraordinary extent. Initially, Gandhi became the uncontested symbol of the struggle in India and the world. The momentum of the movement outlasted Gandhi's withdrawal consequent upon the Chauri Chaura incident in February 1922. The turn of the decade witnessed a sharp decline in the movement primarily due to the lack of the contribution of the leadership. However, the decade between 1920 and 1930 may well be considered the most important for the consolidation of Indian political nationalism and the establishment of a mass-based national movement. Although the Non-Cooperation Movement might have been marked by considerable ambiguity and confusion surrounding the variety of political stands represented, these characteristics from 1920 to 1922 still contributed substantially to the sustained growth of mass nationalism in India and positioned the modernisation process of Indian nationalism on an enduring plane.

The Communist Party of India supported the anti-imperialist struggle and the masses, such as peasants and workers, who began to become directly involved in the Mas movement, still stood outside the Congress framework. Their activities, including the protests of the labour and peasant organisation, became the source of socialist strength. Moreover, the dissatisfaction with the leadership and strategy of the Congress gradually gave rise to a Le the Socialist Faction inside the Congress became very influential and helped the process of mobilisation and the extension of the struggle that accompanied the late-Colonial Indian political expansion during the 1920s.

## **Mobilization and Participation**

The Non-Cooperation Movement engendered widespread participation among the Indian

populace, catalyzing heightened involvement within political spheres. Ensuing the Second World War, the Indian administration intensified demands for Indian support under the Defence of India Act, which the Indian National Congress resolutely opposed. Established political figures, including Gandhi, lodged protests against potentially exploitative taxation levied upon small businesses and cultivators. The Government of India Act (1919) prompted the Indian National Congress to mount an extensive campaign advocating for Interior Ministry appointments to be entrusted to native Ministers.

In the aftermath of the Rowlatt Riyasat Committee Report, political leaders unequivocally condemned the Act, thereby intensifying the mobilization campaign. The Rowlatt Act, perceived as a direct affront to the Home Rule League of 1916, produced significant repercussions within the Board and Council of India. The Indian National Congress embarked upon agitational initiatives, fostering the burgeoning Non-Cooperation Movement. Diversity of opinion existed within the Congress regarding appropriate strategies for attaining Swaraj, prompting Gandhi to seek consensus through a consultative assembly of principal Congress figures to delineate forthcoming activities. Mandating non-cooperation with British authorities and complete abstention from Council participation, Gandhi redirected the nationalist cause—and the Indian National Congress—toward a campaign of expansive grass-roots engagement. Congress thereby orchestrated such mobilization, endorsing Gandhi's directives; thus, women and youth emerged as principal constituents of this movement, embracing roles ranging from leaders to enduring symbols of the nationalist struggle.

#### **(a) Grassroots Involvement**

The Non-Cooperation Movement marked a transitional moment, as the nationalist campaign moved directly from the elite to the masses. Grassroots—especially kin-based—communities, including rural populations and migrants, mobilized in large numbers. Women and youth were also at the forefront, shaping both the objectives and methods of political action.

#### **(b) Role of Women and Youth**

Women and youth played a pivotal role during the Non-Cooperation Movement, exemplifying a profound commitment to Gandhi's vision of mass political activism. The term 'youth' referred to an emerging generation of Indians aged approximately fourteen to thirty-five who, motivated by Gandhi's ideals, entered the national political arena to actively participate in the struggle for Swaraj. Women embraced nationalism on their own terms, with many observing vows of celibacy and temperance, symbolizing a personal and collective transformation under Gandhi's guidance. The movement enabled Indian women to explore new political and social roles that transcended conventional norms of domesticity and motherhood. Although female political leaders remained relatively few, many formed the backbone of grassroots mobilization, often serving as the sole active participants within their villages. The Indian National Congress operated through Gandhi's leadership as the focal institution directing popular political energy. By 1922, under Gandhi's stewardship, Congress became both an ideological and organizational vehicle for popular nationalism, predominantly comprising peasants and small-town dwellers. Grassroots activists mobilized support for Congress at the village and district levels, expanded the recruitment of workers and students, and encouraged women and students to embrace organized nationalistic activity. The mass movement embodied Gandhi's conception of Swaraj as political participation, premised on generalised acceptability and charismatic devotion. The Movement's ethos transcended traditional divisions of class and caste, although the overwhelming majority of its participants were poor peasant and urban labourers. By absorbing a diverse array of groups into the political effort, the Non-Cooperation Movement laid the foundations for modern Indian nationalism.

### **Impact of the Non-Cooperation Movement**

The Non-Cooperation Movement significantly influenced the political and social spheres

in India during the early twentieth century. It served as a principal vehicle for nationalistic aspirations, compelling the British authorities to reevaluate their governing modalities. The absence of the movement's leadership precluded a democratic alternative. Nevertheless, the movement decisively altered the magnitude, dimension, and direction of the contemporary political climate. Some of the principal outcomes ensuing from the Non-Cooperation Movement are summarized below.

### **(a) Long-term Implications for Indian Politics**

The Non-Cooperation Movement constituted the most comprehensive national response to British colonial rule in the twentieth century and marked a turning point in Indian political history. The movement's ideological foundation depended on Mahatma Gandhi's interpretation of ahimsa as both a moral principle and a method of political struggle, with the Congress securing Gandhi's leadership in November 1920. Launching the campaign in March 1921, Gandhi committed the Congress to a programme of non-violent non-co-operation for Swaraj. The resulting mass mobilization (with significant participation by women and youth) reaffirmed the Indian National Congress as the chief focus of political activism in India and forced a reassessment of the strategy for attaining Swaraj."

The Non-Cooperation Movement was the largest nationalist movement of the colonial period, halting colonial penetration of villages for the first time and occupying the national stage for more than two years. Although the political precipitation of the movement lay in the harsh measures adopted after British entry into the First World War, the ideological foundation derived from Gandhi's interpretation of ahimsa (non-violence) as both a moral principle and a method of political struggle. The Congress secured his leadership in November 1920, and at its Gaya session he committed it to a programme of non-violent non-co-operation designed to establish Swaraj (self-rule). The campaign, launched in March 1921, produced unprecedented voluntary mobilization—with very significant participation by women and young people—reaffirmed the Congress as the chief focus of political activism and confounded the political establishment with the inability to develop new strategies for attainment of Swaraj.

### **Critiques of the Non-Cooperation Movement**

Gandhi encountered opposition from leaders such as Malaviya and Tilak through the press. Communal riots throughout 1920-1921 diminished the movement's momentum, compelling Gandhi to suspend activities after the Chauri Chaura violence in February 1922. Critics contend that the Non-Cooperation Movement failed to differentiate between constitutional and non-constitutional struggles, particularly after the Khilafat agitation in 1920. Both M.N. Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru criticized the suspension of the movement following the No-Chauri Chaura incident since, in their view, the British neither implemented the Rowlatt Act nor repressed the movement during that phase. Opposition from inner-party factions in the Congress also shaped debates on the campaign's efficacy.

#### **(a) Opposition from Other Leaders**

Despite Gandhi's broad support within the Indian National Congress, the Non-Cooperation Movement was opposed by many prominent leaders, including Annie Besant, Rabindranath Tagore, Rajendra Prasad, Chittaranjan Das, and Motilal Nehru. Some Congress figures saw Swaraj as an ill-defined nationalist objective that only Congress leaders could interpret. They accepted the concept of a trustee government that would enact Indian priorities. The Non-Cooperation Movement did establish Gandhi's centrality to Congress. Opposition receded after a reticent Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel agreed to the leadership role. Gandhi increasingly acted with the approval of Congress' more secular, Western-educated leaders.

#### **(b) Debates on Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of the Non-Cooperation Movement remains a topic of considerable debate. On the one hand, the movement achieved substantial support from the Indian masses. Hundreds of thousands of Indians embraced Gandhi's ideals, signaling widespread acceptance.

The movement galvanized women and youth, spawning a vigorous movement of political participation. The Indian National Congress, now firmly committed to the cause of self-rule, dedicated itself to mass mobilization. Congress leaders who disagreed with the non-cooperation principle departed the party, and the struggling organization was quickly transformed into an efficient guncotton. These developments added up to a remarkable turnaround in Indian politics.

Nevertheless, criticisms of different kind were raised among Congress leaders, specialist scholars and hardened political activists. Leaders from opposing wings of the national movement argued that the Non-Cooperation Movement was “pretentious and ineffective.” Until the arrival of the civil disobedience movement in 1930, the opportunity arose to reappraise the movement with the advantages of hindsight. Gandhi and his adherents maintained that the basic set of political tools and popular attitudes remained perfectly valid. In balancing these conflicting views, it is important to give due consideration to the claims and reservations advanced by Gandhi’s critics and supporters alike.

### **Swaraj: Concept and Implementation**

The ideological foundation of the Non-Cooperation Movement rests on several seminal concepts, prominently including the theory of ahimsa propounded by Mahatma Gandhi. Indeed, the movement marks the decisive triumph of Gandhian ideas, non-violence, and Swaraj in shaping the political movement in India. Non-violence was the guiding principle of the Non-Cooperation Movement just as it became the lodestar of the freedom struggle. By shifting the leadership from the anglicised elite to the masses, the Indian National Congress under the aegis of Gandhi truly deserved the epithet, ‘a democratic mass movement’. The participation of the women and youths was a hallmark of the movement, and the movement became the first nationalist struggle involving grassroots participation.

The history of the Indian people is the history of a struggle for freedom, and the love of freedom is a passion innate in the Indian race. The craving for self-assertion is another trait of the Indian . That craving for self-assertion that had lain dormant in the bosoms of the people of India for several centuries was awakened by the Non-Cooperation Movement. Swaraj or self-rule was the goal for which they were now prepared to mow down mountain after mountain of difficulties. They had at last found their voices. Yet they had not merely discovered an outlet for their deep-seated desire to lick the chains of slavery. They had, within themselves, a conviction that their claim was just and rightful and in keeping with the natural rights of man.

#### **(a) Practical Aspects of Self-Governance**

Realizing the practical dissemination of Swaraj entails examining specific governmental reforms that align with self-governance. During the Non-Cooperation Movement, Gandhi underscored councils as essential instruments for achieving Swaraj. He outlined that the Cabinets of the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, and the Governor, along with the Indian Councils, required improvement and enlargement, indicating a need for their transformation into representative bodies capable of meeting India’s aspirations. The movement’s overarching demand serves as a concrete foundation for implementing Swaraj in institutional settings, demonstrating that its precepts extend effectively beyond mere ideology into tangible political practice.

### **Gandhi’s Legacy and Influence**

The Non-Cooperation Movement precipitated a paradigm shift within nationalist discourse. It compelled the multitudes to adopt the ideology of nationalism, to organize themselves across the country, and to launch phrase and economic campaigns on a level unprecedented in Indian history. Under Gandhi’s leadership, the Indian National Congress began to undergo political change. In the period after the Non-Cooperation Movement, Gandhi was increasingly identified with anti-capitalist, anti-commercial interests. The movement consolidated and

encouraged minorities, such as Muslims and Untouchables, to participate actively in the Indian nationalist movement. It is since then that Gandhi's ideas of non-violence remain a principal element of modern Indian history (and of worldwide modern history). Gandhi's beliefs, spread by the Non-Cooperation Movement, imparted a legacy that would influence prominent worldwide leaders and social movements. The idea of self-governance continues to be tried throughout the world today. By the conclusion of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Indian populace underwent a political shift. Gandhi's philosophy was globalized, influencing civil rights and world affairs. Democracy became a viable form of governance for most countries.

### **(a) Post-Movement Political Landscape**

After the Non-Cooperation Movement was called off, Indian politics underwent marked changes. The leadership of the Indian National Congress shifted away from Gandhi's inner circle toward individuals who championed revolutionary violence to undermine British authority. This transition signaled a move from the methods associated with the Khilafat Movement to more radical approaches. Concurrently, the All-India Muslim League gained political ascendancy as the torchbearer of Gandhi's model of mass nationalist mobilization.

Gandhi's ideological influence extended well beyond India. His doctrines of non-violence and Swaraj found adherents worldwide, notably inspiring the civil-rights movement in South Africa and the United States, as well as the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa. These efforts adopted Gandhian principles as foundational elements of their strategies.

### **(b) Global Influence of Gandhi's Philosophy**

The Indian struggles for independence inspired later civil rights initiatives worldwide. Gandhi's emphasis on swaraj (self-rule) and non-violence influenced subsequent nationalist movements under colonial rule, while the philosophy of non-violent resistance shaped leaders like Martin Luther King and organizations such as the Black Panther Party in the United States, the African National Congress in South Africa, and the American Indian Movement in the United States.

## **Comparative Analysis with Other Movements**

On his return to India, Gandhi launched the nonviolent programme of Satyagraha to free the country from colonial rule. The essential features of the approach included the active cooperation of the people, utmost self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and the willingness to undergo suffering without a resort to violence and hatred against the oppressors. The paper studies the ideological foundation of the movement, examining the part played by Gandhi in shaping the movement and its ideology. Apart from Gandhi's role, Non-Violence and Swaraj constituted the underlying philosophy of the movement. Since the paper addresses the ideational state of the movement, it stresses the connection of the Non-Cooperation Movement with the political philosophy of modern Indian history. The ideological and political differences between Gandhi and the emerging socialist movement culminated in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934, which adopted a much more offensive attitude towards British imperialism. In South Africa, Gandhi fought on behalf of the rights of Indians for twenty years, and over this period he developed the technique of non-violent protest. Gandhi's political activities on the Indian subcontinent began in 1915. His first important campaign was the nonviolent movement against the salt tax in 1930. Realizing the symbolic significance of the salt tax for the general Indian population, he organized a 240-mile march to the Sea of Arabia, from which he collected sea water that he then began to boil and extract salt.

## **Civil Rights Movement in the United States**

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States is particularly notable for its emphasis on non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. Beginning in the mid-20th century, its goal was to end racial segregation of African Americans and to secure their full political and social rights. Its major leader, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., drew extensively upon the ideas

and methods of Gandhi and the Non-Cooperation Movement in combating segregation and injustice. Beyond South Africa and India, Gandhi's ideas have influenced global movements for justice and political change in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

### **Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa**

Early in the 20th century South Africa had the highest number of Indians outside India. After Gandhi was forced from a train car for sitting in a first-class compartment reserved for "Europeans only" his family had moved to South Africa in 1893. A strong bloc of Indian immigrants who had just arrived in the region—many of whom were too young to have ever been involved politically in India—were looking for a form of political leadership that would not necessarily be tied to the struggles taking place on the Indian subcontinent. Gandhi was an important political leader, inspirational figure, religious guide, and passionate reader of the Bhagavad-Gita. He called on morals or ethics as guides for political actions, and he developed a growing belief that the best means of political action involved nonviolent tactics. His followers would all become dedicated and committed social activists that sought to organize the population of passive Indian residents, but in all the South African Indian groups would rarely mobilize in waves greater than 10 percent even at the movement's height. During the first twenty years of Gandhi's South African career there was no mass movement. He remained a controversial figure, one who many thought exceptional and provocative. The Non-Cooperation Movement in India helped galvanize Gandhi's Indian followers in South Africa and push them into action, and the movement became a unit of resistance along with the Motherland, first with the resolution calling for Swaraj and then with the eventual campaign in 1922. Congress affiliated groups who subscribed to Gandhi's ideology used the Non-Cooperation boycott as a starting point for their own movements and began a range of additional struggles to confront colonial and racial injustices throughout the country.

### **Conclusion**

In the years following the Non-Cooperation Movement's conclusion, the Indian National Congress witnessed a decisive shift in leadership and the nature of its nationalist struggle. The Indian response to British repression grew increasingly militant, seizing the initiative through a series of armed rebellions and local revolts that presaged the "mass revolution" unleashed by Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign. Gandhi's philosophy and strategy nonetheless proved sufficiently compelling to secure the nationalist ascendancy for the next quarter century while constituting an enduring influence that found widespread sympathy much beyond India's borders. In particular, distinctive features of the Mass Movement—broad-based mobilization, active participation of women and youth, periodic withdrawal of support, relative discipline, and adoption of ad hoc proposals that underpinned civil disobedience—emerged as fundamental principles of political organization during the twentieth century. Indeed, Gandhi's anti-colonial agitation served as an exemplar for post-colonial struggles across Africa and Asia as well as India's freedom movement itself. At the same time, his emphasis on non-violent direct action for "Swaraj"—often glossed as "self-rule" or "self-government"—precipitated a series of global civil rights campaigns that notably included the Southern U.S. Freedom Movement and South African opposition to apartheid.

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