



THE ROLE OF HARYANA IN THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT (1920–1922): A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922), launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, marked a decisive turning point in India's struggle for independence by transforming the freedom movement into a mass-based national campaign. While the movement has been widely studied at the national level, the regional experiences of many provinces and districts have received comparatively less scholarly attention. This paper examines the role of Haryana in the Non-Cooperation Movement from a regional perspective, highlighting the political, social, and economic factors that shaped popular participation in the movement. Although Haryana was not a separate administrative unit during the colonial period and formed part of the Punjab Province, its people actively contributed to the nationalist movement through organized protests, public meetings, the boycott of foreign goods and government institutions, and support for Gandhian ideals. The study explores the contributions of local leaders, students, peasants, traders, and rural communities in mobilizing public opinion against British colonial rule. It also analyzes how Gandhian principles of non-violence, swadeshi, and self-reliance resonated with the agrarian society of Haryana, encouraging widespread participation in constructive programmes and political campaigns. Particular attention is given to the emergence of nationalist consciousness through educational boycotts, the promotion of indigenous institutions, and the strengthening of local Congress organizations. Using a historical and analytical approach, the paper draws upon archival records, government reports, newspapers, biographies, and secondary historical literature to reconstruct Haryana's contribution to the movement. The study argues that although the scale of political mobilization in Haryana differed from that of major urban centres, the region played a significant role in extending the reach of the Non-Cooperation Movement into rural North India. The movement fostered political awareness, encouraged collective action, and laid the foundation for Haryana's continued participation in subsequent phases of the Indian freedom struggle, including the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. By emphasizing Haryana's regional experience, this paper contributes to a more inclusive understanding of India's nationalist movement and demonstrates that the success of the Non-Cooperation Movement depended not only on national leadership but also on the active participation of local communities across diverse regions of the country. The study therefore highlights the importance of regional histories in reconstructing the broader narrative of India's struggle for independence.

Keywords: Non-Cooperation Movement, Haryana, Indian National Movement, Mahatma Gandhi, Regional History, Freedom Struggle, Nationalism, Swadeshi Movement, Political Mobilization, Peasant Participation, Colonial India, British Rule

Introduction: -

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922), launched by Mahatma Gandhi under the banner of the Indian National Congress, marked the beginning of a new phase in India's struggle for independence. It transformed the nationalist movement from an elite political campaign into a mass movement by encouraging people from different regions, classes, and communities to participate through peaceful resistance and non-cooperation with the British colonial administration. The movement emphasized the boycott of foreign goods, government schools, law courts, and titles while promoting swadeshi, national education, and self-reliance. Although the Non-Cooperation Movement has been extensively studied at the national level, the contribution of several regions, including present-day Haryana, has not received adequate scholarly attention. During the colonial period, Haryana was a part of the Punjab Province and was predominantly rural, with agriculture forming the backbone of its economy. Despite these conditions, the people of Haryana responded enthusiastically to Gandhi's call. Farmers, students, traders, local leaders, and ordinary citizens participated in political meetings, boycotts, and constructive programmes that strengthened the nationalist movement in the region.

The movement also played a significant role in creating political awareness among the rural population of Haryana. It encouraged people to challenge colonial authority through peaceful means and promoted the ideals of unity, self-respect, and national consciousness. Local leaders and Congress workers effectively mobilized public support, linking regional grievances with the broader objective of achieving self-rule.

This study examines the role of Haryana in the Non-Cooperation Movement from a regional perspective by analysing the participation of its people, the contribution of local leadership, and the socio-political impact of the movement. By highlighting Haryana's regional experience, the paper seeks to enrich the broader historiography of India's freedom struggle and demonstrate the importance of local participation in the success of the national movement.

Aim of the Study: The primary aim of this study is to examine the role of Haryana in the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) from a regional perspective. It seeks to analyse the contribution of local leaders, peasants, students, and the general public in the movement. The study also aims to evaluate the socio-political impact of the movement on Haryana and its significance in the broader Indian freedom struggle. Furthermore, it intends to highlight Haryana's contribution to strengthening the nationalist movement at the grassroots level.

Research Methodology: This study is based on the historical research method and follows a qualitative and analytical approach. It relies on both primary and secondary sources, including archival records, government reports, newspapers, books, research articles, biographies, and official documents related to the Indian freedom movement. The collected data have been critically analysed to assess Haryana's contribution to the Non-Cooperation Movement and its regional significance.

Historical Background of the Non-Cooperation Movement: -

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) was one of the first nationwide mass movements against British colonial rule in India. It was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in September 1920 under the leadership of the Indian National Congress with the objective of attaining Swaraj (self-rule) through peaceful and non-violent means. The movement emerged in response to a series of political events that intensified public dissatisfaction with British rule.

The enactment of the Rowlatt Act (1919), which curtailed civil liberties, and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of April 1919 deeply shocked the Indian people and eroded their faith in the British administration. Simultaneously, the Khilafat Movement united many Indian Muslims with the broader nationalist struggle, strengthening the demand for collective action against colonial rule.

Gandhi advocated non-cooperation as a moral and political strategy, urging Indians to withdraw their support from British institutions. The movement called for the boycott of government schools, colleges, law courts, legislative councils, foreign goods, and honorary titles conferred by the British government. It also promoted the use of swadeshi products, the spinning of khadi, and the establishment of national educational institutions. These measures aimed to weaken the foundations of colonial authority through peaceful resistance rather than violence.

The movement rapidly spread across urban and rural India, attracting the participation of students, lawyers, peasants, traders, workers, and women. Although the movement was suspended in February 1922 following the Chauri Chaura incident, it marked a turning point in India's freedom struggle. It transformed the nationalist movement into a broad-based mass campaign, strengthened the Indian National Congress, and laid the foundation for future movements such as the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement.

Political and Socio-Economic Conditions of Haryana before 1920: -

Before 1920, the region now known as Haryana was part of the Punjab Province under British colonial administration. The region was predominantly rural, with agriculture serving as the principal occupation and the main source of livelihood. Most of the population depended on farming, cattle rearing, and traditional village-based occupations. Frequent droughts, limited irrigation facilities in several areas, and fluctuating agricultural prices created economic hardships for cultivators. Heavy land revenue demands and indebtedness to moneylenders further aggravated the condition of the peasantry, resulting in widespread rural discontent.

Politically, Haryana had limited representation in colonial institutions, and British administrative policies often favoured revenue collection over the welfare of the rural population. The implementation of restrictive laws and the lack of political rights generated dissatisfaction among educated individuals and local leaders. The influence of the Arya Samaj and other socio-religious reform movements contributed significantly to the spread of education, social reform, and nationalist ideas in the region. These organizations encouraged self-respect, indigenous education, and resistance to colonial domination.

The impact of national events, particularly the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, was strongly felt in Haryana. Public meetings, nationalist speeches, and Congress activities gradually awakened political consciousness among students, traders, peasants, and village leaders. Although industrial development was limited, market towns became important centres for the dissemination of nationalist ideas and the boycott of foreign goods.

Spread of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Haryana: -

The Non-Cooperation Movement gained momentum in the region of present-day Haryana soon after its launch by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. Although Haryana was then a part of the Punjab Province, the movement spread rapidly through the efforts of the Indian National Congress, Arya Samaj activists, and local nationalist leaders. Public meetings, political gatherings, and awareness campaigns were organized in districts such as Rohtak, Hisar, Karnal, Gurgaon,

Ambala, and Jind to explain the objectives of the movement and encourage people to withdraw their cooperation from the British government.

The boycott of foreign goods became one of the most visible features of the movement in Haryana. Local markets witnessed campaigns promoting indigenous products, especially khadi, while bonfires of imported cloth were organized in several towns. Students responded to Gandhi's appeal by leaving government educational institutions and supporting the establishment of national schools. Lawyers and educated individuals also participated by reducing their involvement with colonial institutions and encouraging peaceful resistance.

The predominantly agrarian population of Haryana played a crucial role in expanding the movement into rural areas. Farmers attended public meetings, supported nationalist campaigns, and participated in programmes promoting self-reliance and swadeshi. Village panchayats and community organizations helped spread Gandhian ideals of non-violence, discipline, and collective action. Women also contributed by spinning khadi, participating in public gatherings, and encouraging their families to support the movement.

Contribution of Freedom Fighters and Local Leaders: -

The success of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Haryana was largely due to the efforts of local freedom fighters and nationalist leaders who mobilized public support for Mahatma Gandhi's programme of non-violent resistance. These leaders served as a bridge between the national leadership and the rural population, ensuring that the principles of swadeshi, non-cooperation, and self-reliance reached even remote villages. Through public meetings, speeches, and awareness campaigns, they encouraged people to boycott foreign goods, government schools, and other colonial institutions.

Among the prominent leaders associated with Haryana were **Pandit Nekiram Sharma, Chaudhary Matu Ram, and Lala Murlidhar**, who actively promoted nationalist ideas and organized political activities in different parts of the region. Their leadership inspired students, peasants, traders, and educated youth to participate in the movement despite the risk of arrest and official repression. They also worked closely with local Congress committees to strengthen organizational networks and expand political participation at the grassroots level.

Arya Samaj leaders and social reformers also made significant contributions by spreading education, social awareness, and patriotic values. Their institutions became important centres for the dissemination of nationalist ideas and the promotion of indigenous education. Village leaders, teachers, and volunteers played an equally important role by organizing meetings, encouraging the use of khadi, and fostering unity among different sections of society.

Despite strict surveillance and administrative restrictions imposed by the British government, these local leaders continued their efforts with determination. Their dedication helped transform Haryana into an active participant in the national movement. The contributions of these freedom fighters not only strengthened the Non-Cooperation Movement in the region but also laid the foundation for Haryana's continued involvement in later phases of India's struggle for independence.

Role of Farmers, Students, Women, and Traders: -

The success of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Haryana depended significantly on the active participation of farmers, students, women, and traders, each of whom contributed in different ways to the nationalist cause. As Haryana was predominantly an agrarian region, farmers formed the largest section of the population and played a vital role in extending the

movement to rural areas. They attended public meetings, supported Gandhian ideals of non-violence and swadeshi, and participated in campaigns that challenged British authority through peaceful means. Their involvement strengthened the connection between local agrarian grievances and the broader struggle for national independence.

Students also emerged as an important force in the movement. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's call, many students boycotted government schools and colleges and joined national educational institutions. They participated in public meetings, distributed nationalist literature, and encouraged young people to contribute to the freedom struggle. Their enthusiasm helped spread political awareness among the youth and created a new generation of nationalist activists.

Women in Haryana made valuable contributions despite prevailing social restrictions. They supported the movement by spinning and wearing khadi, participating in public gatherings, encouraging family members to adopt swadeshi practices, and assisting in constructive programmes. Their involvement demonstrated that the freedom struggle had become a people's movement extending beyond traditional gender roles.

Traders and businessmen also played a crucial role by boycotting imported goods and promoting indigenous products in local markets. Many merchants voluntarily stopped selling foreign cloth and encouraged consumers to purchase locally produced goods. Their economic support reinforced the swadeshi campaign and weakened the market for British imports.

The combined efforts of these social groups transformed the Non-Cooperation Movement into a broad-based regional campaign, fostering political consciousness and strengthening Haryana's contribution to India's struggle for independence.

Boycott Movement and Public Participation: -

The boycott movement formed the core of the Non-Cooperation Movement and became one of the most effective methods of resisting British colonial rule in Haryana. Following Mahatma Gandhi's appeal, people across the region voluntarily withdrew their cooperation from government institutions and actively participated in campaigns promoting swadeshi and national self-reliance. The boycott of foreign goods, particularly imported cloth, gained widespread support in towns and villages. Public demonstrations and awareness campaigns encouraged people to purchase indigenous products, especially khadi, as a symbol of patriotism and economic independence.

Government schools, colleges, and educational institutions also witnessed the impact of the boycott movement. A number of students left government institutions in response to Gandhi's call and supported the establishment of national schools that promoted Indian values and nationalist ideals. Public meetings and processions were organized by local Congress committees and social reform organizations to educate citizens about the objectives of the movement and to encourage peaceful resistance against colonial policies.

Although British authorities responded with surveillance, restrictions, and occasional arrests of nationalist workers, public enthusiasm remained strong throughout much of the movement. The boycott campaigns not only challenged the economic and administrative foundations of British rule but also strengthened political awareness and collective action. In Haryana, the movement demonstrated that organized public participation could become a powerful instrument in the struggle for India's independence.

Challenges and British Government's Response: -

The Non-Cooperation Movement in Haryana encountered several challenges that affected its pace and effectiveness. One of the primary difficulties was the predominantly rural nature of the region, where low literacy rates and limited communication facilities made the dissemination of nationalist ideas relatively slow. Many villagers were initially hesitant to participate because of economic dependence on the colonial administration and fear of official retaliation. The movement also faced organizational constraints, as local Congress committees and nationalist organizations had limited financial and institutional resources to sustain large-scale political activities.

The British government responded to the growing nationalist movement with strict administrative measures aimed at suppressing public dissent. Political meetings and processions were closely monitored, and restrictions were imposed on public gatherings to prevent the spread of anti-colonial sentiments. Nationalist leaders and activists were subjected to surveillance, arrests, and imprisonment under various colonial laws. Newspapers supporting the movement faced censorship, while government officials attempted to discourage participation through intimidation and administrative pressure. Educational institutions and government employees were also warned against supporting nationalist activities.

Despite these repressive measures, many people in Haryana continued to support the movement through peaceful protests, the boycott of foreign goods, and participation in constructive programmes. However, the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Mahatma Gandhi following the Chauri Chaura incident in February 1922 disappointed many enthusiastic supporters and temporarily reduced the momentum of the campaign.

Nevertheless, the challenges and the British government's harsh response failed to suppress the growing spirit of nationalism. Instead, colonial repression exposed the undemocratic character of British rule and strengthened public determination to continue the struggle for independence through future mass movements based on Gandhian principles of non-violence and civil resistance.

Impact of the Movement on Haryana and the Indian Freedom Struggle: -

The Non-Cooperation Movement had a profound impact on Haryana by awakening political consciousness and integrating the region into the broader Indian nationalist movement. For the first time, large sections of the rural population—including farmers, students, traders, women, and local leaders—actively participated in a coordinated political campaign against British colonial rule. The movement strengthened the spirit of nationalism and encouraged people to view the struggle for independence as a collective responsibility rather than the concern of a few political leaders.

One of the most significant outcomes of the movement was the expansion of the organizational base of the Indian National Congress in the region. Local committees became more active in mobilizing public opinion, organizing meetings, and promoting Gandhian ideals such as *swadeshi*, non-violence, and self-reliance. The widespread adoption of *khadi* and the boycott of foreign goods fostered economic nationalism while reducing dependence on imported British products. These developments contributed to the growth of a politically aware and socially united society.

Although the movement ended in 1922, its influence continued to shape Haryana's participation in subsequent phases of the freedom struggle. Many individuals who were inspired during the

Non-Cooperation Movement later took active roles in the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement, and other nationalist campaigns. The experience gained through peaceful protests and mass mobilization strengthened local political leadership and increased public confidence in non-violent methods of resistance.

At the national level, the Non-Cooperation Movement transformed India's freedom struggle into a genuine mass movement. Haryana's contribution, though regional in scale, formed an integral part of this nationwide awakening. The movement demonstrated that sustained public participation across diverse regions was essential for challenging colonial rule and ultimately achieving India's independence in 1947.

Conclusion: -

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) marked a significant turning point in the history of India's freedom struggle by transforming the nationalist movement into a broad-based mass campaign. Although present-day Haryana was then a part of the Punjab Province, the region made a meaningful contribution to the movement through the active participation of its people and local leadership. The spread of Gandhian ideals of non-violence, swadeshi, and self-reliance inspired farmers, students, traders, women, and social reformers to challenge British colonial rule through peaceful and organized resistance.

The study demonstrates that Haryana's predominantly agrarian society responded positively to the call for non-cooperation despite facing economic hardships, limited educational opportunities, and strict colonial control. Local leaders, Congress workers, and Arya Samaj reformers played a vital role in mobilizing public opinion, organizing political meetings, promoting indigenous products, and encouraging the boycott of British institutions. These efforts helped strengthen nationalist consciousness and connected the region with the wider objectives of the Indian National Congress. Although the British government attempted to suppress the movement through surveillance, censorship, arrests, and administrative restrictions, such measures failed to eliminate the growing spirit of nationalism. Instead, colonial repression reinforced public awareness of the injustices of British rule and encouraged greater unity among different sections of society. Even though the movement was suspended after the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922, its influence continued to shape Haryana's participation in later phases of the freedom struggle, including the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. In conclusion, Haryana's contribution to the Non-Cooperation Movement was significant not merely because of the scale of participation but because it reflected the successful expansion of the national movement into rural North India. The region's experience illustrates how local initiatives, grassroots leadership, and collective public action strengthened the foundation of India's independence movement. A regional perspective on Haryana therefore enriches the broader historiography of Indian nationalism by demonstrating that the success of the freedom struggle depended upon the active involvement of ordinary people across diverse regions of the country.

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