

Non cooperation in india and role of swarajists in indian independence



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Movement (1920) Congress session held at Calcutta September 1920 had a discussion with Khilafat Committee members and decided to launch a Mass movement under the leadership of Gandhiji called the Non Cooperation Movement. Another Congress session held at Nagpur on December 1920, in which Congress members collectively decided to participate in the movement. As part of the Non Cooperation Indians gave up the British titles such as Kaiser-i-hind, Sir, Knighthood etc. boycotted foreign goods in particular foreign cloth was burnt in bonfire, police stations were attacked, railway stations burnt, teachers, lawyers and others resigned their jobs. Students deserted the class rooms; foreign liquor shops were looted and burnt. Peasants started a movement called NO TAX Campaign. For example, Baba Ramchandra, a Sanyaasi started a protest movement at Awadh followed by Jawaharlal Nehru who started Kisan Sabhas. Barbers and washer men refused to work for British. Belloori Sitaram Raju led a movement at Garden Hills in Andhra Pradesh.

Tea plantation workers of Assam and peasants at Malabar Coast also participated in the movement fought. But a violent incident in Chauri Chaura at Gholakpur District in Uttar Pradesh in which 22 police men were burnt alive by a mob, so that Gandhiji called off Non Cooperation in the year 1922. Role and contribution of Swarajists towards the freedom of India Major developments in Indian politics occurred during 1922-28. Immediately, the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement led to demoralisation in the nationalist ranks.

Moreover, serious differences arose among the leaders who had to decide how to prevent the movement from lapsing into passivity. One school of

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thought headed by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru advocated a new line of political activity under the changed conditions. They said that nationalists should end the boycott of the Legislative Councils, enter them, obstruct their working according to official plans, expose their weaknesses, transform them into arenas of political struggle and thus use them to arouse public enthusiasm.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Ansari, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others, known as 'no-changers', opposed Council entry. They warned that legislative politics would lead to neglect of work among the masses, weaken nationalist fervour and create rivalries among the leaders. They, therefore, continued to emphasise the constructive programme of spinning, temperance, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability and grassroots work in the villages and among the poor. This would, they said, gradually prepare the country for the new round of mass struggle.

In December 1922, Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party with C. R. Das as president and Motilal Nehru as one of the secretaries. The new party was to function as a group within the Congress. It accepted the Congress programme except in one respect it would take part in Council elections. The Swarajists and the 'no-changers' now engaged in fierce Political controversy. Even Gandhiji, who had been released on 5 February 1924 on grounds of health, failed in his efforts to unite them. But both were determined to avoid the disastrous experience of the 1907 split at Surat.

On the advice of Gandhiji, the two groups agreed to remain in the Congress though they would work in their separate ways. Even though the Swarajists had little time for preparations, they did very well in the election of November 1923. They won 42 seats out of the 101 elected seats in the Central Legislative Assembly. With the cooperation of other Indian groups they repeatedly out-voted the government in the Central Assembly and in several of the Provincial Councils. They agitated through powerful speeches on questions of self-government, civil liberties and industrial development.

In March 1925, they succeeded in electing Vithalbai. Patel, a leading nationalist leader, as the president (Speaker) of the Central Legislative Assembly. They filled the political void at a time when the national movement was recouping its strength. They also exposed the hollowness of the Reform Act of 1919. But they failed to change the policies of the authoritarian Government of India and found it necessary to walk out of the Central Assembly first in March 1926 and then in January 1930. In the meanwhile, the 'no-changers' carried on quiet, constructive work.

Symbolic of this work were hundreds of ashrams that came up all over the country where young men and women promoted charkha and khadi, and worked among the lower castes and tribal people. Hundreds of National schools and colleges came up where young persons were trained in a non-colonial ideological framework. Moreover, constructive workers served as the backbone of the civil disobedience movements as their active organisers.

While the Swarajists and the 'no-changers' worked in their own separate ways, there was no basic difference between the two, and, because they kept on the best of terms and recognised each other anti-imperialist character.

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They could readily unite later when the time was ripe for a new national struggle. Meanwhile, the nationalist movement and the Swarajists suffered another grievous blow in the death of C. R. Das in June 1925. As the Non-Cooperation Movement petered out and the people felt frustrated, communalism reared its ugly head. The communal elements took advantage of the situation to propagate their views