

Colonial Indian Nationalists, the British Empire, and World War I: Motilal Nehru between Gokhale and Gandhi*

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Introduction

This article investigates how colonial Indian nationalists shifted their views towards the British Empire after World War I (WWI).

Around the centenary year of the war, many researches have appeared to investigate WWI. However, most of the literature focuses on Europe, the United States replacing the British hegemony after the war, and Russia that led to a communist state through the revolution in 1917. The impact of the Great War on non-Western areas has not been adequately examined.

India is no exception. Certainly there are frequent mentions of India in research on WWI. Colonial India was deeply involved in the war as a key part of the British Empire. India made significant contributions to the victory of Britain, its suzerain state (ruling state), by providing substantial military supplies and over a million personnel.¹⁾ In terms of military strength as well as the geographical expanse of its military dispatches, India helped the British Empire execute warfare for a lengthy amount of time. Before the outbreak of WWI in 1914, the Indian Army had an extremely broad presence stretching to Egypt, the Indian Ocean coasts, Singapore and Hong Kong. After the war began, the army was dispatched to the Western Front in Europe, as well as to the Middle East, Mesopotamia, East Africa and even to the Shandong Peninsula in China.²⁾ For example, the 36th Sikh Infantry arrived at Qingdao on October 23, 1914 soon after the outbreak of WWI, to support a fortress siege by the Japanese Army, with whom Britain was allied.³⁾ WWI revealed that colonial India was indispensable for the British Empire to be ‘the empire on which the sun never sets’; an empire that stretched to the Far East. Furthermore, it is important to consider political movements in British India during and after the war to understand how and why the imperial hegemony declined.

Turning to domestic affairs in India, the war had significant effects on the country’s internal politics. Immediately after the war ended, political relations

between the British government and Indian leaders rapidly worsened. As seen below, important triggers included the Constitutional Reform in 1919, known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, which were disappointingly granted to Indians in return for their wartime collaboration. Passage of the Rowlatt Act, which replaced the Defence of India Act of 1915 and regulated political movements in India, as well as the Amritsar massacre (the Jallianwala Bagh massacre) in Punjab, were other important events in the disintegrating relations between the two countries. While deep splits appeared among Indian political leaders concerning these frustrating policies and actions by the colonial government, coercive British rule gave rise to nationwide anti-colonial support for the Rowlatt Satyagraha (non-cooperation) movement, which was led by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948). Gandhi's collaboration with Muslims would have been extremely difficult, if not for the Great War between the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire. One reason why Gandhi became a leading figure in the Indian National Congress (hereinafter called the Congress) was his relationship to Muslims who sought to protect the Caliphate of the Ottoman Empire. The relationship also drove the Congress to adopt Gandhi's 'non-cooperation' as its policy even though he did not occupy a central position within the party at the time.

To make clear the influence of WWI on Anglo-Indian relations, this article considers colonial Indian nationalists' views on the British Empire. The analysis focuses on Motilal Nehru (1861–1931), who turned from a pro-British constitutional moderate to an anti-British radical non-cooperator around 1920. He is compared with Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842–1901) and Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915), both moderate leaders who led the Congress before WWI in pursuit of Indian dominion (self-governing polity in the British Empire), as well as Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), who led the Indian independence movement towards *purna swaraj* (complete self-rule) after the war.

These five prominent political figures were personally connected. Gokhale not only politically succeeded Ranade in the moderate camp but was also respected as a 'political *guru*' by Gandhi. One reason why Gandhi chose Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor was that Gandhi owed his leadership in the Congress to support from Jawaharlal's father, Motilal. Tracing the thoughts of these five Indian leaders on the British Empire is key to understanding nationalist thoughts in colonial India from the latter half of the 19th century up to independence in 1947. This research will make clear that WWI brought about tremendous changes in the concept of Indian nationalism on the British Empire.

1. Indian Nationalists' Views on the British Empire before WWI

1.1. Mahadev Govind Ranade

Ranade was one of the founding members of the Congress, which led the nationalist movement after its formation in 1885 and realized Indian independence in 1947. He served as a judge on the Bombay High Court from 1893, and played leading roles in political, economic, social and religious movements in the Maharashtra region in western India.⁴⁾

Ranade is known as one of the most eminent proponents of the Drain Theory, which offered economic foundations for the nationalist movement in colonial India.⁵⁾ He criticized the drain of wealth from British-ruled India to Britain. But, at the same time, he also pointed out problems on the Indian side. According to Ranade, capital that could be invested in economic activities had instead been hoarded or wasted in India, although economic growth needed to be ultimately realized by Indians themselves. He insisted that bad Indian practices, unfit for capitalism, should be corrected, and that capital should be used to build up domestic industry. He also commented on the technical factors of industrial development and argued that Indians must study Western industrialization processes and utilize their technologies. He thought that India could achieve economic development only if Indians accepted Western technology and did not use it blindly but rather applied it to the country's context. In 1872, he blamed Britain for the drain of wealth, yet also encouraged learning economic lessons from Britain. However, in later years Ranade had little confidence in the Drain Theory approach and instead placed particularly strong emphasis on Indian self-reform.⁶⁾

This shift in emphasis, however, did not mean that Ranade denied the fact that Indian wealth drained. In an 1892 lecture on 'Indian Political Economy', Ranade clearly discussed the Drain Theory and examined the connection between colonial rule and economic decline.

Stagnation and dependence, depression and poverty—these are written in broad characters on the face of the land and its people. To these must be added the economical drain of wealth and talents, which Foreign subjection has entailed on the country.⁷⁾

As this passage demonstrates, Ranade continued to insist that adequate attention should be paid to the drain of wealth and its negative economic

effects.

Though Ranade accepted the drain of wealth from India to Britain as fact, he insisted on not attributing India's poverty to the British rule and not turning a blind eye to the country's own internal problems. He emphasized that India had profited greatly from its ties with Britain, and even claimed that most of the wealth leaving India for Britain was reasonable payments.⁸⁾ The main point of Ranade's thought on the economic drain was to warn Indian economic entrepreneurs not 'to divert and waste your energies in the fruitless discussion of this question of tribute'⁹⁾ He believed that politicians should handle the drain and asked Indian entrepreneurs not to get mired in economic theory, but rather to focus on questions of business.

It is important to note that Ranade paid more attention to internal factors of economic growth such as mentality and technical skills than to external issues like resources and machinery such as coal, iron and steam engines. He placed strong emphasis on people's internal reform in his writing on agricultural land issues in the Deccan region: 'we must probe the disease where its roots lie deep in the national heart, if we wish to remove the disgusting surface symptoms which strike our view'.¹⁰⁾ Ranade argued that even if the drain of wealth were to be stopped and the adoption of Western science and technology led to external improvements, true economic development would never be achieved in India without internal reformation of the Indian people. This was why Ranade asked Indian entrepreneurs to revise their customs preventing accumulation of wealth, such as equal distribution of inheritance and their religious ideas of avoiding pursuit of profit,¹¹⁾ and to learn from British characteristics amenable to capitalism including 'a spirit of enterprise, an alertness of mind, an elasticity of temper, a readiness to meet and conquer opposition, a facility of organization, social ambition and aspiration'.¹²⁾ He clearly meant to attack the Drain Theory. Ranade harbored a deep worry that entrepreneurs would adhere excessively to the Drain Theory and make unreasonably low estimate of the very British values that advanced economic development.

Ranade's opinion on Britain was equally important to his economic theories. He thought of British people not as enemies to be excluded, but rather as neighbours to be respected. He firmly believed that a close connection with Britain was beneficial for India. This was the most important reason why Ranade lost confidence in the Drain Theory approach. He saw India's link with Britain as highly advantageous for Indian economic development, which would be accomplished through self-help and internal improvement:

As a compensation against all these depressing influences, we have to set

off the advantage of a free contact with a race which has opened the Country to the Commerce of the world, and by its superior skill and resources has developed communications in a way previously unknown.¹³⁾

The sole dependence on Agriculture has been the weak point of all Asiatic Civilization. Contact with superior races ought certainly to remedy this helplessness, and not to aggravate it, as has been to a large extent the case in this Country.¹⁴⁾

According to Ranade, since 1875 India had transformed from a purely agricultural country to one that partly engaged in manufacturing and trade.¹⁵⁾ The country was in the process of industrializing under British rule.

To summarize, Ranade's economic theories placed the utmost importance on self-help efforts by Indians. It was not the physical environment but people's mentality that was the most important target for reform. In his view, any economic growth would be merely superficial without progress in mind forming the foundation of capitalist activity. Dependence on state intervention in the economy and excessive emphasis on the Drain Theory could lead people to underestimate the need for self-help efforts and attribute Indian underdevelopment to the British rule. For these reasons, Ranade gradually distanced himself from the Drain Theory.

The basis of Ranade's economic ideas is deeply tied to his opinions on the British Empire. His trust in it and its imperialist world order was by no means an exception. Most Indian nationalists in the 19th century did not harbour hostile feelings towards the empire but actually had firm, even optimistic, faith in the imperial order. Although it seems logical that a typical advocate of the Drain Theory, such as Ranade or Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917), would have voiced the strongest anti-British argument, these nationalists actually assumed extremely anglophile attitudes. This seemingly contradictory position revealed the unique character of Indian nationalism at the time. Ranade and Naoroji wanted India to achieve status as a self-governing dominion within the British Empire, but they never had any desire for complete independence. They firmly believed that close ties with imperial Britain supported Indian interests. It is important that the harmonious view on British imperialism was not limited to moderate leaders like Ranade and Naoroji. Even Lala Lajpat Rai (1865–1928), an extremist leader, perceived British rule as favourable to India. He reasoned that Britain should follow its good tradition of respecting freedom and rights, in contrast with Russia's despotic rule, even while demanding withdrawal of the Partition of Bengal in the Benares Session of the Congress in 1905.¹⁶⁾

Ranade's strong trust in the British Empire appears extremely strange considering the principles of self-determination and nationalism in the international politics after WWI. Taking each region of India including Maharashtra, the Marathi-speaking area, as an individual nation, he envisioned 'a Federated India, distributed according to nationalities, and subjected to a common bond of connection with the Imperial Power of the Queen-Empress of India'.¹⁷⁾ Ranade imagined an Indian federation, composed of linguistic nations, within the British Empire. His political blueprint consisted of the tripartite cooperative system of a Marathi nation, a federated India and the British Empire. This perspective differed completely from those of the Indian nationalists that fought against British imperialism after WWI. Britain was thought of as a good symbol of liberal governance even from the point of view of colonial nationalism around 1900.

To sum up, in Ranade's mind, British rule gave Indian people a chance to cultivate the self-governing mind suitable to a modern political system. Complete independence from Britain was never part of his imagined future for India. Rather, Ranade aimed for a self-governing dominion federally composed of linguistic nations within the British imperial federation. Indian nationalism and British imperialism could live together in his vision of a federally organized three-layered imperial order. This can be described as a multi-layered order of federal empire.

1.2. Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Gokhale, who led the moderate camp in the Congress as Ranade's political successor, similarly placed a strong faith in the British Empire, and aimed not for independence but for the status of dominion within it.¹⁸⁾

The Anglo-Indian relationship, however, was strained at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, the Partition of Bengal in 1905 by Governor General Curzon caused an upsurge in anti-British sentiments among Indians, which resulted in the Swadeshi Movement calling for boycotts of British goods across India. Extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920) and Bipin Chandra Pal (1858–1932) deepened their alliances through an opposition movement against the Partition of Bengal, and these extremists garnered greater influence within the Congress. In the Calcutta Session the following year, the Congress adopted a policy of actively boycotting British goods and buying *swadeshi* (domestic goods), which put serious economic pressure on the colonial government to repeal the Partition. The meaning of the word *swadeshi* is 'domestically produced goods', as '*swa*' means 'one's own' and '*desh*' is 'land' or

'country'. The Swadeshi Movement not only encouraged anti-British political action but also exerted a considerable effect on the Indian economy. It promoted domestic production of various goods, including cotton clothes, by encouraging boycotts of foreign goods and the purchase of Indian products. The Movement deployed non-tariff barriers that protected and cultivated national capital and native industry.¹⁹⁾

Even moderate leaders who had cooperative relations with the colonial government opposed the Partition of Bengal. In the presidential address at the Benares Session of the Congress in 1905, Gokhale criticized Curzon's ideal of efficient governance and compared it with William Gladstone's emphasis on freedom. This address clearly protested against the Partition and supported the Swadeshi Movement.²⁰⁾ However, Gokhale also called attention to the harmful effects of extreme protectionism, and asserted a need to import foreign manufacturing machinery for advancing domestic industry.²¹⁾ It should be pointed out that his economic ideas about the *swadeshi* had much in common with Ranade's criticisms of the Drain Theory.

There is another significant similarity between their views on British rule. Gokhale wanted India to be a self-governing dominion within the Empire and held British constitutionalism in high esteem. However, he never blindly accepted colonial rule. In fact, Gokhale critically examined the colonial bureaucratic administration. In his opinion, the early Congress leaders had placed significant trust in two magnificent goals for which the British Empire ruled India. The first was introducing high-standard Western administration, especially from England, into India; the second was helping Indian people make steady progress towards, and eventually achieve, an equally high level of self-government. However, Gokhale opined that even if advanced administrative techniques were introduced in India, these original goals would never be reached as long as the autocratic rule and bureaucratic control by the colonial administration continued.²²⁾ It was acceptable to him that a handful of British bureaucrats would monopolize the political power when few Indians learned advanced administrative skills in Western-style higher education. Yet, many Indians actually had completed Western-style higher education in India. This fact led Gokhale to assert that usurping power from the educated Indian elites in Curzon's way was a blight on British honor.²³⁾

Gokhale disagreed with Curzon, who was sceptical towards Indian self-rule. Gokhale justified self-governance from the angle of efficiency, on which Curzon also placed significance. Colonial administrators in India justified their monopoly of power in terms of efficiency. However, centralized autocratic administration was, in practice, inefficient because it excluded educated native

elites and raised deep dissatisfaction among the subjects. Thus, Gokhale told the British rulers that the only way to effectively rule India to Britain's advantage was to give India gradual self-government.²⁴⁾ The essence of his argument was that a self-ruling India would not only benefit Indian people but also serve British interests.

A strong trust in British imperialism and constitutionalism was indispensable to the idea that Indian self-government would protect British interests and their reputation. Gokhale propounded two types of imperialism: nobler imperialism, which sought progress of all subjects in the empire, and narrower imperialism, which presumed the superiority of a particular nation and the subordination of other nations.²⁵⁾ In Gokhale's view, the reason why Britain and India were increasingly competing was that Britain had shifted from a nobler to a narrower imperialism and attempted to rule autocratically in a Russian style, which was unsuitable to British constitutionalism. His criticism against the British colonial rule implied that Britain should return to a nobler empire.

In Gokhale's descriptions of the two types of imperialism, the aims of colonial nationalism would either be a self-governing dominion or an independent sovereign state. In a nobler empire, where all imperial subjects should prosper, the rational goal of colonial nationalists would be promotion from colony to dominion, since there are few benefits of fighting for independence at huge sacrifice. On the other hand, in a narrow empire, where autocratic rule is based on differences between and discrimination against races and nations, native leaders would struggle for independence at any price. There would be little chance of being granted the status of self-ruling dominion in a narrower empire, since it would contradict the imperial principle of national superiority.

Taking Gokhale's two concepts of imperialism into consideration, it becomes easier to understand why Ranade and Naoroji expressed sincere loyalty to Britain, though they both pointed to the drain of wealth from India to Britain, which was the main basis of Indian economic nationalism. These men both expected Britain to stop depriving India of wealth on her own accord and to be liberal and constitutional enough to govern Indian in an imperial, but also noble, manner where the colony would see progress. Gokhale further asked Britain to be a noble empire, which would boost its reputation as a liberal nation, by asserting that both India and Britain would benefit from granting political freedom and administrative powers to Indians.

2. Indian Nationalists' Views on the British Empire after WWI

2.1. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Ranade and Gokhale displayed remarkable trust in the British Empire during the *Pax Britannica* period, yet this trust began to waver at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite large-scale contributions to Britain during WWI, India received a disappointing degree of return after the war, which led many Indian leaders to feel that their trust was betrayed. The principle of self-determination, so lauded in the post-war international society, had a considerable influence on the Indian national consciousness.²⁶⁾ The struggle for national autonomy was further accelerated by Gandhi's participation and rise to prominence in Indian politics following his return from South Africa. He was not an anti-British nationalist from the beginning, as shown by his interest in becoming a barrister in Britain during his youth and then his decision to volunteer in the South African War. The most striking reason for his shift to an anti-modern, anti-British and anti-colonial leader was his experience of racial discrimination in South Africa. Gandhi, with his anti-racist sentiments, viewed Britain as an incarnation of Western materialist civilization. His conversion to an anti-imperialist paralleled the transformation in Indian nationalism.

Gandhi's earnest political activity in India began in 1915 when he returned from South Africa. Through cooperation with the Khilafat Movement which started in 1919, Gandhi gained support from Muslims and became a nationally-known politician who quickly established leadership within the Congress.²⁷⁾ Indian Muslims launched the Khilafat Movement to preserve the Caliphate since the status of Caliph, the supreme religious leader of Islam, fell into crisis following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in WWI. After the Ottoman Empire surrendered in 1918, where the Sultan also reigned as the Caliph, the Turkish National Movement sought to abolish the Caliphate and to build a modernized secular nation-state. The Khilafat Movement, which sought to protect the Caliphate, fought against the Allies, in particular Britain, which defeated the Ottoman Empire. Conflict between Muslims and Britain over the religious status enabled Gandhi and Indian Muslims to work together despite their religious difference. Gandhi criticized the British rule for preventing Indians from controlling their own desire and ruling themselves, while Muslim leaders of the Khilafat Movement regarded Britain as an absolute threat to their supreme religious leader. These two parties shared a significant interest in fighting a common enemy.

Gandhi led the Non-Cooperation Movement (the First Non-Violent

Disobedience Movement, also called the *Satyagraha* Movement). This Movement was a major milestone on the path to the establishment of friendly relations between Hindus and Muslims, and to an independent India. Since religious conflict was among the most serious political issues in India, religious harmony between the two largest communities was a prerequisite of Indian independence. Because of the Ottoman Empire's collapse in 1922 and the abolition of the Caliphate by the Republic of Turkey in 1924, the Khilafat Movement lost its *raison d'être* and disappeared. Gandhi ended the Non-Cooperation Movement after its key tenet of non-violence was broken during the Chauri Chaura incident of 1922, in which rioters set fire to a police station and killed over 20 police officers.

The two movements both failed to achieve their goals and led to Gandhi's temporary retirement from politics. However, cooperation with the Khilafat Movement not only pushed Gandhi to the position of a national leader of the Congress but also made him believe strongly in the possibility of religious harmony. The conflict between Muslims and Hindus was a lifelong concern for Gandhi because overcoming differences between religions and castes would be critical to achieving independence from Britain and building Indian national solidarity and identity. Later he came back to the independence movement, and led the Second Non-Violent Disobedience Movement from 1930 to 1934.

Gandhi's concept of self-government ultimately meant *panchayat raj* (village self-government). In his philosophy of *swaraj* (self-government), an autonomous village was the ideal form of Indian society. Gandhi believed that his lifetime goal of religious harmony could be realized in a self-sufficient village community that was based on ideals of village self-rule.²⁸⁾ The term *swaraj* means to rule (*raj*) oneself (*swa*). For Gandhi, 'self' (*swa*) included, on the one hand, an individual and a village at the micro level, and, on the other, India, Asia and the East at the macro level. When focusing on self-rule by an individual and a village, Gandhi's *swaraj* referred to self-control by tempering bodily and material desires in an ethical life. In terms of self-rule of India, Asia or the East, it meant self-governance based on the sameness between the ruler and the ruled, that is, being politically independent from Britain or the West.

The significance of Gandhi's ideas lie in his vision of *swaraj* both at the micro and at the macro levels. Gandhi, who strictly controlled his desires for food and sexual indulgence to achieve an ethical life, led the Indian independence movement on the same principle. Therefore, many Indians perceived the political movement and his leadership as ethically legitimate.²⁹⁾ One reason that Gandhi chose non-violence as a political means for winning independence and for self-government was his rejection of using pleasure or

pain as tools. From his viewpoint, taking advantage of other people's bodily comforts and discomforts amounted to nothing more than affirming the material desires lying at the core of Western modern life. Even if the dream of an independent India was to come true through violence, it would not be worthy of being called *swaraj*. Gandhi's practices of vegetarianism, fasting and sexual abstinence were not only expressions of his ethical belief but also of his political plans to fundamentally overthrow the British imperial order.

2.2. Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru, who led the Indian nationalist movement after Gandhi, stood in clear contrast to his predecessor. Jawaharlal Nehru aimed to achieve Indian modernization by making use of Western modern civilization, symbolized by its science and technology. Both Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, however, shared an extremely critical opinion of the imperial international order under British hegemony.

While Gokhale demanded dominion status and cooperation between Britain and India, in 1927 Jawaharlal Nehru refuted this view on the British Empire by arguing that colonial rule, even if benevolent, would lead to a negative consequence, since cooperation could only produce positive results when built through an equal partnership.³⁰⁾ Some countries in the East had succeeded in developing railways and telecommunications without British support, so India could also build these modern technologies without imperial cooperation. This was why Jawaharlal Nehru concluded that colonial rule could not be justified in terms of material gains. He maintained that it would be difficult for India to remain a member of the British federation even if the Indian dominion was achieved, because there were economic conflicts and few sentimental connections between Britain and India while Britain and its white dominions were emotionally connected within the federal empire. Jawaharlal Nehru argued that the majority of Indian leaders hoped for independence rather than status as a self-governing dominion although this desire was not verbally expressed by other Indian leaders. It is difficult to judge the accuracy of this speculation, but it is certain that Indian nationalists' trust in the British Empire had been considerably damaged in 1927, a full twenty years before independence.

In his presidential address at the 1929 Lahore Session of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru argued that status as a self-governing dominion did not mean true autonomy for India, and that Britain must completely withdraw from its military occupation and relinquish economic control. Although the

Congress's left wing unsuccessfully tried to include 'complete independence' in the resolution of the 1921 session, a resolution to that effect was finally passed in the 1929 session during Jawaharlal Nehru's presidency. The hegemonic power of the British imperial order was rapidly declining in India. It is significant that after Gandhi's isolation in the Congress, Indian nationalist movement was led by Jawaharlal Nehru who held a negative, doubtful and distrusting attitude towards the British Empire from early on, as well as Vallabhbhai Patel (1875–1950), the first Minister of Home Affairs in independent India. The successive rise to power in the Congress of two anti-imperialist leaders, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, significantly influenced the colonial Indian nationalist movement and its attitude towards the British Empire after WWI.

3. WWI, Motilal Nehru and the British Empire

3.1. *Swadeshi* and Boycott

As discussed above, there were differences in views on British imperial rule and Indian self-government between Ranade and Gokhale, who led the nationalist movement before WWI, and Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who took leadership of the Congress and won independence after the war. This radical transformation was symbolized by the political life of Motilal Nehru around 1920.

In March 1907, when the *Swadeshi* Movement was growing, Motilal Nehru supported *swadeshi* and criticized boycotts in his presidential address of the First Provincial Conference of the United Provinces in Allahabad. He argued that true *swadeshi* meant making foreign goods exit the market by producing better-quality products at cheaper prices in fair market competition.³¹⁾ In his economic theory, it was foolish to boycott goods from Britain, the world's greatest industrial nation, for the purpose of driving them out of the market, and it was highly unreasonable to force poor Indian people to buy expensive domestic goods. Certainly, a boycott was a politically powerful weapon, but there was no connection between a boycott and *swadeshi* from industrial and economic perspectives. He argued that the only real way to promote the *Swadeshi* Movement was to develop a modernized industry in India. For young Indians to learn modern industrial skills they would need access to training facilities in India and they would need to be sent to Western countries and Japan. Economic modernization and development were indispensable for *swadeshi*, which could be achieved only when foreign products and skills were

accepted. Creating a firm foundation for *swadeshi* required the proactive introduction of advanced foreign technologies. Motilal's concepts of *swadeshi* and boycott had much in common with the ideas of Ranade and Gokhale, who regarded Indian contact and exchange with the outside world as useful for its progress. These ideas were opposed to the arguments of extremist leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who called for boycotts in the Swadeshi Movement.

Motilal Nehru's key arguments in the Swadeshi Movement were focused on constitutionality and legality. He estimated the cost of a boycott to Indian economy to be extremely high. Motilal Nehru argued that while accusing the British of injustice, people should also remember that British rule had brought about modern political institutions, including municipal boards, district boards and elected legislative councils, as well as a Western educational system that included public schools and universities. Furthermore, the British government itself had guaranteed freedom of assembly to protest colonial rule. He even asserted that the Swadeshi Movement must be based on sympathy for and trust in the government.

His deep belief in the benefits of a connection to Britain was the fundamental reason why Motilal Nehru chose to be a constitutional agitator. He advocated for governmental support and rejected boycotting British goods. Despite the rise of anti-British sentiment in India following the Partition of Bengal, he remained pro-British and moderate, expressing his disapproval of the extremists who confused *swadeshi* with boycott. His moderateness was based on his exceedingly high estimation of British constitutionalism. However, his conviction gradually broke down in the wake of WWI.

3.2. From Constitutional Agitator to Gandhian Non-Cooperator

When WWI broke out in 1914, Motilal Nehru cemented his loyalty to Britain. Under the wartime regime, however, the colonial government was more cautious towards political movements in India. Britain exerted excessive control over India, which led to the emergence of doubt and distrust towards the British rule even among moderate leaders such as Motilal Nehru. In 1916, two political events occurred in wartime India that were extremely important for the nationalist movement: the Lucknow Pact to forge unity between Hindus and Muslims, and the formation of the Home Rule League. The first Home Rule League was founded in April 1916 by Tilak in Poona. A separate but affiliated Home Rule League was set up by Annie Besant (1847–1933), a theosophist from London, who had joined the Congress to lead the Indian

nationalist movement. Tilak and Besant worked together to develop the Home Rule Movement, with Tilak's League active in western and central India, and Besant's League covering the other areas. The Home Rule Movement enjoyed a national presence with broad political support across India. Motilal Nehru's son, Jawaharlal Nehru, was affiliated with both organizations, although he worked mainly with Besant's League. Yet Motilal Nehru himself, while respecting Besant, initially neither participated in nor gave support to the movement. He eventually joined it when Besant was preventatively detained by the Governor of Madras, Baron Pentland, in June 1917. The governor aimed to shut down Besant's movement. This action led to strong protests among Indians, and even Motilal Nehru argued forcibly for Besant's immediate release. The government of Madras, which intended to contain the political movement, actually ended up inflaming it. Motilal Nehru turned his hometown of Allahabad into a central base for the movement. He was gradually breaking away from his pro-British moderateness.

The gap between Motilal Nehru and the moderate leaders widened even further in 1918 in their responses to the provincial diarchy proposed by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Samuel Montagu (1879–1924). In August 1917, Montagu promised self-government to India in exchange for its wartime contributions. He visited India from November 1917 to April 1918 to meet and exchange views with influential Indian leaders, including Motilal Nehru.³²⁾ Refusing to give India a responsible self-government, which the Congress and the All India Muslim League requested together, Montagu proposed introducing a new system of diarchy to the Indian provinces. The diarchy, far from a substantial local self-government, meant that the Governor and the Executive Council under the governorship in each province reserved powers in important policies such as public order, policing, justice and taxation, while minor civil affairs including education, agriculture, healthcare and sanitation fell under the provincial ministers. These ministers would be appointed by the provincial governor from among the legislative members who were elected on limited franchise. In the discussion on the proposal in the Provincial Legislative Council in August 1918, Motilal Nehru rejected the diarchy bill, arguing that all the administrative powers other than those relating to law and order should be handed over to the elected ministers who were responsible to the legislature. This issue further deepened his opposition to influential moderates such as Tej Bahadur Sapru (1875–1949), Dinshaw Edulji Wacha (1844–1936) and Surendranath Banerjee (1848–1925).

A tragic incident occurred in 1919 that distanced Motilal Nehru even further from the moderates and turned him into a radical critic of British

colonial rule. In April 1919, military forces led by Colonel Dyer killed many people in Amritsar, Punjab who were protesting the Rowlatt Act that had passed in March 1919 to replace the Defence of India Act of 1915. This is known as the notorious Jallianwala Bagh massacre. After the bill had been submitted to the Imperial Legislative Council, numerous groups and communities throughout India had raised fierce criticisms of the act, which continued strict control over Indian political activities even after the Great War ended. Among the harshest protests against the massacre was the Rowlatt Satyagraha Movement, led by M. K. Gandhi. One of the central bases of the Satyagraha Sabha, founded by Gandhi across India, was set up in Allahabad, the United Provinces, where the Nehru family resided. Jawaharlal Nehru took part in the movement.

However, it was not the Rowlatt Act itself but rather the Amritsar massacre that led Jawaharlal Nehru's father, Motilal Nehru, to support Gandhi's radical Non-Cooperation Movement.³³⁾ Motilal Nehru had many friends in Punjab, some of whom were victims of the massacre. Immediately after the incident, he appealed to Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, and Satyendra Prasanno Sinha (1863–1928), the Under-Secretary of State for India, for victim support. It seems that Motilal Nehru was the political leader from outside Punjab who was most deeply concerned about the massacre and who most energetically tried to support the victims. During his survey of the massacre in Punjab as a member of the Congress's committee of enquiry, Motilal Nehru became aware of the brutality of British rule.³⁴⁾ Based on his survey experiences, Motilal Nehru's presidential address at the Congress session in Amritsar in 1919 included serious accusations concerning the oppressive British rule in Punjab.³⁵⁾

The Amritsar massacre was also significant for the Indian nationalist movement because it gave Motilal Nehru the chance to work closely with Gandhi in the Congress's committee of enquiry on the massacre. In the Calcutta Special Session of the Congress in September 1920, Motilal Nehru, who had continued agitating in a legal and constitutional way, offered his decisive support for Gandhi's radical non-cooperation tactics. Even if Motilal's collaboration with Gandhi in Punjab did not immediately lead him to accept Gandhi's extreme ideas and approaches, it certainly led to his consequent conversion from a constitutional moderate to a Gandhian radical, which was symbolized by a major change in his clothing and Nehru family's life at the Anand Bhavan (the Nehrus' residence) in Allahabad from a British or Western style to an Indian style.³⁶⁾

After adopting non-cooperation as its policy, the Congress launched a new movement under Gandhi's leadership from the Nagpur Session in

December 1920 onwards. This movement included boycotting colonial educational, administrative and judicial institutions, returning titles bestowed by Britain and refusing to pay taxes. Motilal Nehru, after retiring as a barrister, devoted himself to propelling the Non-Cooperation Movement forwards. The Anand Bhavan was the *de facto* headquarters of the movement in the United Provinces. Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, however, were arrested on December 6, 1921 and sentenced to six months in prison the following day.

In a district jail at Lucknow, Motilal Nehru expected Gandhi to continue calling for civil disobedience across India, yet Gandhi did the complete opposite. A violent incident occurred in February 1922 in Chauri Chaura in the eastern United Provinces, in which protesters who had joined the Non-Cooperation Movement set fire to a police station and many police officers were burned to death. Gandhi responded by ending the movement. For the other leaders of the Non-Cooperation Movement it was entirely unimaginable to stop striving for the grand goal of independence over such a minor incident of violence. Motilal Nehru was no exception. When receiving the news of the movement's end in prison, he was quite astonished.

After being released in June 1922, Motilal Nehru returned to his position as a constitutional moderate campaigning for gradual progress in the colonial political system, probably because he was acutely aware of the fragility of the Gandhian non-violent approach of non-cooperation. He resumed the struggle for a self-governing India in the legislative councils of the provinces and the centre in the colonial political structure. Motilal got away from Gandhi and circled back to Ranade and Gokhale.

Conclusion

Ranade's and Gokhale's views on the British Empire contrasted with those of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. A high level of trust in and expectations of the British imperial order led the moderate leaders, Ranade and Gokhale, to aim for the status of self-governing dominion. Their criticisms against British rule were not from an anti-colonial perspective, but from the viewpoints of un-British rule, meaning that Britain should govern India in a liberal and constitutional way suitable to Britain itself. Put rhetorically, the moderates' Britain was not an enemy to be defeated but rather a teacher from whom to learn. Their views on Britain as a model drove them to demand an ideal rule of India and to severely criticize its misgovernment. It was not strange, therefore, that moderate Ranade and Naoroji were founding advocates of the Drain Theory, the most powerful logic of Indian economic nationalism.

WWI, however, was the turning point of Indian nationalist views on the British Empire. As time passed after the war, the high level of trust that moderate nationalists had placed in the British rule declined, while anti-imperial nationalists aiming for complete independence won broader support. Even moderate Motilal Nehru turned from a constitutional agitator into a radical non-cooperator. After Gandhi halted the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922, Motilal Nehru returned to the moderate camp, calling for dominion status in a constitutional way. However, he faced strong pressure from young extremists including his son and Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945), who demanded *purna swaraj* (complete self-government or independence) through non-cooperation and disobedience under the influence of Gandhi. The tension within the Congress consequently made it possible for Gandhi to return to the political scene and for the party to change its goal from dominion to independence. In this sense, Motilal’s political reconversion in 1922 from a Gandhian radical to a British-style constitutional moderate seems to have been in vain for the Indian nationalist movement. The tide of colonial Indian political history turned significantly after the end of WWI, when Motilal made his initial conversion in the same direction. Motilal’s political life around 1920 mirrored Indian nationalist views on the British Empire.

Notes

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- 1) Budheswar Pati, *India and the First World War*, Atlantic Publishers, 1996, Chs. 2–3; Kaushik Roy, *The Army in British India: From Colonial Warfare to Total War 1857–1947*, Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 77–101; Harjeet Singh (intr.), *India’s Contribution to the Great War*, Pentagon Press, 2014.
 - 2) Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918–22*, Manchester University Press, 1984, pp. 3, 56.
 - 3) George Morton-Jack, *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India’s Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 211–212.
 - 4) For further information on Ranade, see Tomoaki Ueda 上田知亮, *Shokuminchi Indo no Nashonarizumu to Igrisu Teikoku kan: Gāndī izen no jichi kōsō* 植民地インドのナショナルリズムとイギリス帝国観：ガンディー以前の自治構想 (*Colonial India and British Empire: Nationalism and Imperialism before Gandhi and World War I*), Minerva Shobō ミネルヴァ書房, 2014, Chs. 3–5.
 - 5) Richard Tucker, *Ranade and the Roots of Indian Nationalism*, The University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp. 77–78.
 - 6) By 1890, Ranade had developed a careful attitude towards the Drain Theory. Tucker, *Ranade and the Roots of Indian Nationalism*, p. 181.
 - 7) Mahadev Govind Ranade, “Indian Political Economy” (1893), in Bipan Chandra

- (ed.), *Ranade's Economic Writings* (herein, *REW*), Gian Publishing House, 1990, p. 337.
- 8) Ranade, "Industrial Conference" (1890), in *REW*, pp. 273–274.
 - 9) Ranade, "Industrial Conference", p. 274.
 - 10) Ranade, "The Agrarian Problem and its Solution" (1879), in *REW*, p. 2.
 - 11) Ranade, "Indian Political Economy", p. 337.
 - 12) Ranade, "Indian Foreign Emigration" (1893), in *REW*, pp. 383–384.
 - 13) Ranade, "Indian Political Economy", pp. 337–338.
 - 14) Ranade, "Netherlands India and the Culture System" (1890), in *REW*, p. 296.
 - 15) Ranade, "Present State of Indian Manufactures and Outlook of the Same" (1894), in *REW*, p. 413.
 - 16) Lala Lajpat Rai, "Repressive Measures in Bengal" (1905), in B. R. Nanda (ed.), *The Collected Works of Lala Lajpat Rai*, Vol. 2, Manohar, 2003, p. 24.
 - 17) M. G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power, and Other Essays*, including K. T. Telang, "Gleanings from Maratha Chronicles", University of Bombay, 1961 (Punalekar and Co., 1900), p. 8.
 - 18) For further information on Gokhale, see Ueda, *Shokuminchi Indo no Nashonarizumu to Igrisu Teikoku kan*, Ch. 7.
 - 19) For more on the influence exerted by the Swadeshi Movement on the economy in Bengal and the businesses in the region, see Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903–1908*, People's Publishing House, 1973, pp. 108–148.
 - 20) Gopal Krishna Gokhale, "Congress Presidential Address" (1905), in D. G. Karve and D. V. Ambekar (eds.), *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale Vol. II: Political* (herein, *GKGP*), Asia Publishing House, 1966, pp. 188–200.
 - 21) Gokhale, "The Swadeshi Movement" (1907), in *GKGP*, pp. 223–235.
 - 22) Gokhale, "The Indian Problem" (1908), in *GKGP*, pp. 372–373.
 - 23) Gokhale, "England's Duty to India" (1905), in *GKGP*, pp. 342–343.
 - 24) Gokhale, "New Reform Club Banguet" (1905), in *GKGP*, pp. 337–338. In this lecture, Gokhale also mentioned Japan's rise as an example to vividly display the results of self-rule.
 - 25) Gokhale, "Our Political Situation" (1904), in *GKGP*, p. 177.
 - 26) For more on the US President Woodrow Wilson and the influential self-determination principle relating anti-colonial nationalism in India, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, 2007, Chs. 4 and 8.
 - 27) Until June 1919, Gandhi was isolated in the Congress with a limited influence. In the Calcutta Special Session of the Congress in 1920, he won a narrow, even unexpected, victory with supports of the Central Khilafat Committee and Motilal Nehru. Since the supports for his Non-Cooperation Movement was limited within the Congress, his victory in the session did not necessarily mean that he had established leadership over the party. Even in the Nagpur Session that same year, it was not the case that his advocated policy was adopted. Richard Gordon, "Non-cooperation Cooperation and Council Entry, 1919 to 1920", in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal (eds.), *Locality, Province, and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics 1870 to 1940*, Cambridge University Press, 1973, pp. 123–153; B. R. Nanda, *The Nehrus: Motilal and Jawaharlal (New Edition)*, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 182–184. In the Calcutta Special Session, in addition to Annie Besant's firm opposition to Gandhi's proposal, Bipin

Chandra Pal submitted a revised offer that excluded legislative councils from the target of boycott. The voting results were 1,826 for Gandhi, and 884 for Pal, out of a total of 2,773 votes (63 abstentions). As seen in the results from Bengal (551 for Gandhi, 395 for Pal) and Madras (161 to 145), Gandhi's policy of complete boycott faced a major opposition. His fragile position in the party at the time was shown by Lala Lajpat Rai's closing remarks expressing discontent with Gandhi's plan to boycott schools and law courts. *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News*, Sep. 17, 1920.

- 28) Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1989, p. 114.
- 29) On the significance of controlling sexual desire in Gandhi's political philosophy, especially his religious experiments with *brahmacharya*, see Eijiro Hazama, "The Paradox of Gandhian Secularism: The metaphysical implication behind Gandhi's 'individualization of religion'", *Modern Asian Studies*, 51 (5), 2017, pp. 1394–1438.
- 30) Jawaharlal Nehru, "Psychology of Indian Nationalism" (1927), in Uma Iyengar (ed.), *The Oxford India Nehru*, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 95–106.
- 31) Motilal Nehru, "Speech at the First Provincial Conference of the United Provinces in Allahabad, March 29, 1907", in Ravinder Kumar and D. N. Panigrahi (eds.), *Selected Works of Motilal Nehru: Vol. 1 (1899–1918)* (hereafter *SWMN1*), Vikas Publishing House, 1982, pp. 198–204.
- 32) On Montagu's visit of India, see his diary; Edwin S. Montagu (edited by Venetia Montagu), *An Indian Diary*, William Heinemann, 1930.
- 33) Ravinder Kumar points out three reasons why Motilal Nehru did not initially support Gandhi's Satyagraha Movement. First, he deeply respected legality and procedural justice from his professional background as a barrister. Second, it was quite difficult to judge how politically competent Gandhi was in 1919. Third, it was not clear how effective his approach of non-violent non-cooperation was. Ravinder Kumar, "Introduction", in *SWMN1*, p. 21.
- 34) Kumar, "Introduction", p. 22.
- 35) Motilal Nehru, "Presidential Address at the Amritsar Congress", in *SWMN1*, pp. 264–306.
- 36) Nanda, *The Nehrus*, pp. 184–185.