

Lecture-34



Civil Disobedience Movement

The observance of the Independence Day in 1930 was followed by the launching of the Civil Disobedience Movement under the leadership of Gandhi. It began with the famous Dandi March of Gandhi. On 12 March 1930, Gandhi left the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmadabad on foot with 78 other members of the Ashram for Dandi, a village on the western sea-coast of India, at a distance of about 385 km from Ahmadabad. They reached Dandi on 6 April 1930. There, Gandhi broke the salt law. It was illegal for anyone to make salt as it was a government monopoly. Gandhi defied the government by picking up a handful of salt which had been formed by the evaporation of sea. The defiance of the salt law was followed by the spread of Civil Disobedience Movement all over the country. Making of salt spread throughout the country in the first phase of the civil disobedience movement, it became a symbol of the people's defiance of the government.

In Tamil Nadu, C. Rajgopalchari led a march-similar to the Dandi march-from Trichinopoly to Vedaranyam. In Dharsana, in Gujarat, Sarojini Naidu, the famous poetess who was a prominent leader of the congress and had been president of the congress, led non-violent satyagrahis in a march to the salt depots owned by the government. Over 300 satyagrahis were severely injured and two killed in the brutal lathi charge by the police. There were demonstrations, hartals, boycott of foreign goods, and later refusal to pay taxes. Lakhs of people participated in the movement, including a large number of women.

In November 1930, the British government convened the first round table conference in London to consider the reforms proposed by the Simon commission. The congress, which was fighting for the independence of the country, boycotted it. But it was attended by the representatives of Indian princes, Muslim league, Hindu Mahasabha and some others. But nothing came out of it. The British government knew that without the participation of the congress, no decision on constitutional changes In India would be acceptable to the Indian people.

Early in 1931, efforts were made by Viceroy Irwin to persuade the congress to join the second round table conference. An agreement was reached between Gandhi and Irwin, according to which the government agreed to release all political prisoners against whom there were no charges of violence. The congress was to suspend the civil disobedience movement. Many

nationalist leaders were unhappy with this agreement. However, at its Karachi session which was held in March 1931 and was presided over by Vallabhbhai Patel, the congress decided to approve the agreement and participate in the second round table conference. Gandhi was chosen to represent the congress at the conference which met in September 1931.

At the Karachi session, of the congress, an important resolution of fundamental rights and economic policy was passed. It laid down the policy of the nationalist movement on social and economic problems facing the country. It mentioned the fundamental rights which would be guaranteed to the people irrespective of caste and religion, and it favoured nationalisation of certain industries, promotion of Indian industries, and schemes for the welfare of workers and peasants. This resolution showed the growing influence of the ideals of socialism on the nationalist movement. Besides Gandhi, who was the sole representative of the congress, there were other Indians who participated in this conference. They included Indian princes, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communal leaders. These leaders played into the hands of the British. The princes were mainly interested in preserving their position as rulers. The communal leaders had been selected by the British government to attend the conference. They claimed to be representatives of their respective communities and not the country, though their influences within their communities were also limited. Gandhi alone as the representative of the congress represented the whole country.

Neither the princes nor the communal leaders were interested in India's independence. Therefore, no agreement could be reached and the second round table conference ended in a failure. Gandhi returned to India and the Civil Disobedience Movement was revived. The government repression had been continuing even while the conference was going on and now it was intensified. Gandhi and other leaders were arrested. The government's efforts to suppress the movement may be seen from the fact that in about a year 120000 persons were sent to jail. The movement was withdrawn in 1934. The congress passed an important resolution in 1934. It demanded that a constituent assembly, elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise, be convened. It declared that only such an assembly could frame a constitution for India. It thus asserted that only the people had the right to decide the form of government under which they would live. Though the congress had failed to achieve its objective, it had succeeded in

mobilizing vast sections of the people in the second great mass struggle in the country. It had also adopted radical objectives for the transformation of Indian society.

Impact of Civil Disobedience Movement

- It shattered people's faith in the British Government and laid the social root for the freedom struggle, and popularised the new method of propaganda like the prabhat pheris, pamphlets etc.
- It ended the exploitative salt policy of British was followed by the defiance of forest law in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Central province and the refusal to pay the rural 'Chaukidari tax' in Eastern India.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION:

1. Why Salt was chosen as the central formula for the Civil Disobedience Movement?

- A. Salt in a flash linked the ideal of swaraj with almost concrete and universal grievance of the rural poor.
- B. Salt afforded a paltry but psychologically important income like Khadi, for the poor through self-help group.
- C. It offered to the urban adherents the opportunity of a symbolic identification with mass suffering.
- D. All of the above

Ans: D

2. Which of the following was one of the eleven demands of MK Gandhi before Civil Disobedience Movement?

- A. Reduce expenditure on the military and civil administration by 50 per cent.
- B. Change Arms Act allowing popular control of issue of firearms licences
- C. Only A
- D. Both A & B

Ans: D

3. Who among the following was the founder of Khudai Khidmatgars?

- A. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan

B. P Krishna Pillai

C. K Kelappan

D. C Rajagopalachari

Ans: A

4. The Chittagong Revolt Group was started by:

A. Abbas Tayabji

B. Surya Sen

C. GD Birla

D. Sarojini Naidu

Ans: B

5. Who among the following instigated the aboriginal Kachari villagers in Assam to break forest laws?

A. Somra Majhi

B. Bonga Majhi

C. Chandraprabha Saiktani

D. JM Sengupta

Ans: C