

8. Civil Disobedience Movement

After the resolution of Complete Independence was passed in the Lahore session, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. Before beginning this movement, Gandhiji put up various demands in front of the British Government. One of the important demand was to cancel the salt tax and monopoly of British Government for manufacture of salt. But because the demands of Gandhiji were rejected by the Government he decided to launch Satyagraha all over India by breaking the salt act.



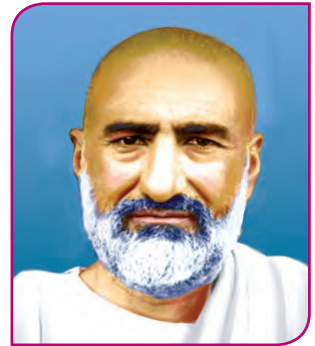
Dandi March

Salt is an important ingredient in the food of common people. Hence it was unjust to impose tax on an essential commodity like salt. Therefore Gandhiji started the Salt Satyagraha. Salt Satyagraha was symbolic. The extensive objective behind it was to break the oppressive and unjust laws of the British Government through peace and Satyagraha.

Gandhiji chose Dandi, a seashore, in Gujarat to begin the Salt Satyagraha. On 12 March 1930 Gandhiji set out from Sabarmati Ashram with 78 followers for launching the Salt Satyagraha. A distance of approximately 385 km was covered on foot and Gandhiji delivered speeches in the villages on the way. Through the speeches Gandhiji appealed to the people to be

fearless and join the Civil Disobedience Movement. Due to Gandhiji's speeches message of Civil Disobedience Movement spread everywhere and a favourable atmosphere was created. On 5 April 1930, Gandhiji reached Dandi. On 6 April Gandhiji broke the salt act by picking up the salt laying on the sea shore of Dandi and the Civil Disobedience Movement started all over the country.

The Peshawar Satyagraha : In the North West Frontier, Khan Abdul Gafar Khan was the most loyal follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He was also known as 'Frontier Gandhi'. He had founded the organisation called 'Khuda-i-Khidmatgar'. On 23 April 1930, he started satyagraha at Peshawar. The town was in the hands of the satyagrahis nearly for a week. The British Government gave orders to the Garhwal regiment to carry out open firing on the Satyagrahis, but Chandrasing Thakur, an officer of Garhwal Regiment, refused to open fire. He was court martialled and was given a severe punishment.



Khan Abdul Gafar Khan

The British Government found itself in a difficult situation due to the satyagraha launched by Mahatma Gandhi. On 4 May 1930 Gandhiji was arrested. Suppressive measures were undertaken all over the country. There was protest all over the country due to the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi.

Solapur Satyagraha : The mill workers were on the forefront in the Solapur satyagraha. On 6 May 1930, hartal was observed in Solapur. A huge procession

was organised in Solapur. The District Collector gave orders of firing on the procession.

Many volunteers along with Shankar Shivdare died in the firing. As a result, people started attacking police stations, railway station, courts, municipal buildings etc. The Government declared Martial Law and the agitation was suppressed. Those who took lead in this movement, such as Mallappa Dhanshetti, Shrikrishna Sarda, Qurban Hussain and Jagannath Shinde were hanged to death.



Mallappa Dhanshetti



Shrikrishna Sarda



Qurban Hussain



Jagannath Shinde

Dharasana Satyagraha : The satyagraha at Dharasana in Gujarat was led by Sarojini Naidu. The police lathi charged on the satyagrahis who came forward to break the Salt Act. The satyagrahis silently tolerated the blows of the lathi. When they were taken away for medical aid, another batch of satyagrahis came forward to replace them. This



Sarojini Naidu

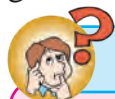
continued endlessly. In Maharashtra, salt satyagraha took place at Wadala, Malvan and Shiroda.

Where there were no salt-pans, the forest laws were broken. There were jungle satyagrahas at Bilashi, Sangamner, Kalavan, Chirner and Pusad in Maharashtra. The tribal people also took part in the satyagraha in large numbers.

Sacrifice of Babu Genu : In Mumbai, there was agitation against foreign goods. The vehicles transporting foreign goods were obstructed. Babu Genu Said, a mill worker, from Mumbai was in the forefront in this movement. A truck carrying foreign goods, safeguarded by the police, came in front of Babu Genu. To stop the truck he lied down on the road. Police threatened him, but he did not move from his place. Finally he was crushed under the truck. Babu Genu gained martyrdom. This



Babu Genu



Do you know ?

Features of Civil Disobedience Movement :

- All the movements, till now, were limited only to urban areas. But this movement became a nationwide movement. People from rural areas registered their participation.
- Women also took part in large numbers. Kasturba Gandhi, Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, Avantikabai Gokhale, Lilavati Munshi, Hansaben Mehta led the satyagraha.
- This movement was based on complete non violence. The British Government was trying to greatly suppress the movement, but the people protested unarmed. Due to this the Indian people became fearless.

sacrifice of Babu Genu gave inspiration to the national movement.

Round Table Conference : In the opinion of British Prime Minister Ramsay Mac Donald, while the Civil Disobedience Movement was going on, the constitutional issues regarding India should be thought over. For this purpose he organised a conference at London. This conference is known as 'Round Table Conference'. In the period between 1930 to 1932, three round table conferences were organised.

First Round Table Conference :

Ramsay MacDonald was the chairman of the Round Table Conference. Representatives of England and India participated in the Conference. These included Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Barrister Jinnah etc. In the conference there were discussions on various topics such as Responsible Government at central level, establishment of federal State in India etc. Representatives of different political parties in India and rulers of Princely states participated in the conference. However, the Indian National Congress did not participate in it. The Indian National Congress was a body that represented the country. Without its participation, the deliberations in the Round Table Conference were indeed meaningless.

Gandhi-Irwin Pact : The British Prime Minister expressed his hope of participation of Indian National Congress in the Second Round Table Conference. In view of the appeal made by the Prime Minister, the Viceroy released Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders from prison. Thus, a conducive atmosphere was created for the Congress to discuss the issues freely. A pact was signed between Mahatma Gandhi and Viceroy Irwin which is known as the 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact'. According to this pact, the British Government assured that the system of Responsible Government would be added in the proposed constitution

of India. Consequently Indian National Congress withdrew the Civil Disobedience Movement and agreed to attend the Round Table Conference.

Second Round Table Conference : In 1931, the second round table conference was organised. Mahatma Gandhi attended this conference as a representative of the Indian National Congress. Along with the Indian National Congress, representatives of various castes and communities, political parties as well as princely states were invited. The Government put forth the issue of minorities in the Round Table Conference. There were differences regarding this issue and also regarding the nature of the prospective Federal constitution. Gandhiji tried to bring unanimity in the opinion but was unsuccessful. Finally Gandhiji became disappointed and returned back to India.

Poona Pact : Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar



represented the Dalits in the Round Table Conference. He demanded separate electorates for the Dalits. After the Second Round Table Conference the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald declared 'Communal Awards'. According to it, Dalits were given separate electorates. Gandhiji went on fast unto death at Yerwada jail protesting against the granting of separate electorate on the basis of caste. The leaders of Indian National Congress requested Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to reconsider the demand for separate electorates. Keeping in mind the interest of the nation Dr. Ambedkar was ready to accept this request. In 1932 Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar signed the famous Poona Pact. According to this pact separate electorates for the Dalits was

cancelled and a provision for reserved seats was made.

Third Round Table Conference : In November 1932 the Third Round Table Conference was organised in England. The Indian National Congress boycotted the conference. Thus this conference proved to be futile.

Second Phase of Civil Disobedience Movement : Gandhiji returned to India from the Second Round Table Conference with a dejected mind. He decided to restart the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhiji

was immediately arrested. Hence there was discontent among the people.

Government responded to this movement by using inhuman oppressive methods. There was strangling of civic rights everywhere. The Indian National Congress and its associated institutions were declared illegal. Restrictions were levied on national newspaper and literature. Finally in April 1934 Gandhiji withdrew the movement and the historic phase of Civil Disobedience Movement came to an end.

Exercise

1. Rewrite the statements by choosing the appropriate options.

(Mahatma Gandhi, Khuda-i-Khidmatgar, Ramsay Mac Donald, Sarojini Naidu)

- (1) organised the Round Table Conference in London.
- (2) Khan Abdul Gafar Khan established the organisation named
- (3) led the Dharasana Satyagraha.
- (4) In the Second Round Table Conference participated as a representative of Indian National Congress.

2. Explain the following statements with reasons.

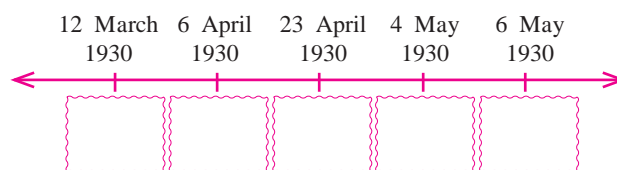
- (1) Chandrasingh Thakur was court martialled and severely punished.
- (2) The Government declared Martial Law at Solapur.
- (3) The deliberations in the First Round Table Conference proved to be meaningless.
- (4) Gandhiji began fast unto death in the Yerwada jail.

3. Answer the following questions in 25 to 30 words.

- (1) Why did Gandhiji decide to break the Salt Act to begin the satyagraha all over the country?
- (2) Why did the Indian National Congress

withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement?

4. Complete the following timeline of Civil Disobedience Movement.



Project

- (1) Gather additional information along with photographs about the work of following personalities in the Civil Disobedience Movement and exhibit it in the class. (a) Sarojini Naidu (b) Khan Abdul Gafar Khan (c) Babu Genu Said.
- (2) Plot on an outline map of India, the places mentioned in the chapter where the Civil Disobedience Movement took place.

