CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS AFTERMATH (1930-39)

An Overview

The closing of the year 1929 brought a fresh lease of hope and fortitude among the people of India. The historic Lahore session of Congress had in no uncertain terms declared that henceforth the attainment of the Purna Swaraj or ‘Complete independence’ will be its goal and a programme of mass movement and full fledged boycott was on the anvil. The coming months were to be stormy and it was evident that the new movement would be met with brutal repression and censorship. But if fear would have been the factor then people would have not shown the zeal they had displayed in the earlier movements i.e., Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation.

It was decided in the meeting to organize ‘Independence Day’ on 26 January 1930 all over the country. Civil disobedience had already been sanctioned in the Lahore Congress and the National Flag was unfurled near the banks of the Ravi river. Gandhi inaugurated the campaign on 12 March 1930, by embarking along with a band of 78 followers on a 241 mile march from Ahmedabad to the village of Dandi (in Navasari district) on the sea-coast. At first the idea and programme of violation of salt laws was tucked away by the government and some Congress intellectuals as a fancy, they made satirical comments that whether the King Emperor could be unseated
by boiling sea water in a kettle. But Gandhi had proved himself in
the formative years of 1920s and this time also when this fancy,
snowballed into an all-India campaign of the breach of salt laws, the
British government unleashed the harshest repression the Congress had
yet known.¹

In Kanpur

Kanpur had been very active in the period between March
1929 and February 1930 as can be ascertained from the nationalist
programme going on in the city, particularly that of the boycott of
foreign goods. The revolutionaries too were creating trouble for the
government and the city was an amalgamation of these two school of
thoughts, both of whose objectives was to get the country rid of
foreign rule. No effort was spared to educate the people about the
issues concerning India and the policies being shaped at the top
level.

The city was fortunate to have a galaxy of leaders who were
energetic and had earned love and respect of the people and they
rubbed shoulders with the top nationalist leadership of the country.
Leaders like Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi, Narayan Prasad Arora,
Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Jawaharlal Rohatgi fitted in this genre.

¹ B.R. Nanda, The Making Of A Nation: India’s Road To Independence, Delhi, 1998, p. 204.
With 26 January 1930 being celebrated as ‘Independence Day’ the city Congress took out a very big procession to celebrate the occasion. The Youth League also took out a very big procession which started from the Sanatan Dharm (SD) College at Nawabganj at 1 p.m. and after touring the entire city reached Shraddhanand Park at 6 p.m. Balkrishna Sharma ‘Naveen’ read the proclamation of independence amidst cheer and jubilation. It was passed unanimously.\(^2\)

These processions give an interesting idea of the minds of the people of the city and ability and resourcefulness of the leadership. Kanpur was one of the few cities where the energy, vigour and determination of the common man came to the fullest. Young and old, middle class people, workers, and even women would assemble under the banner of Congress and would march from street to street and locality, without any fear, bearing placards, shouting slogans and singing national songs. Students role’ was the most promising one and a great number of schools and colleges in the city had became hotbeds of nationalist activity.

On 26 January at 6 a.m. in the morning the tricolor flag was hoisted by the TCC in the Tilak Vyayam Shala in presence of a large crowd. The function was marked with solemnity and dignity befitting the occasion. Many individuals too hoisted the flag at their

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residences. The flags were in great demand. The TCC was flooded with demands for tricolor but it was difficult to please all and so people had to switch over to paper flags. The love for tricolor and its magnificent display in every nook and corner of the city highlighted the firm resolve of the people and the impeding action they now had to take for the love of their country.³

The Beginning of Salt Satyagraha

While precise plans for civil disobedience were still to be evolved, Gandhi outlined his first part of a broad strategy of confrontation. In Young India on 30 January he made an offer to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy. If the British would satisfy eleven ‘simple but vital needs of India’ there would be no civil disobedience and Congress would heartily participate in any conference where there is perfect freedom of expression and demand. The eleven points were (1.) total prohibition, (2.) reduction of the Sterling Rupee ratio to ¼, (3.) reduction of the land revenue to at least 50% and its subjection to legislative control, (4.) abolition of the salt tax, (5.) reduction of military expenditure, (6.) reduction of I.C.S. salaries, (7.) a protective tariff on foreign cloth, (8.) passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill, (9.) discharge of political prisoners not convicted of murder or

³ Vartman, 29.1.1930.
attempted murder, (10.) abolition of the C.I.D. or its popular control, and (11.) issue of firearms licenses under popular control.⁴

These demands of Gandhi appeared to be somewhat fanciful and were taken with a sense of bewilderment by Congress leaders like Motilal Nehru. Yet the underlining significance of presenting these demands was to make the people realize what ‘Independence’ is all about and what it means to be living under bondage of an alien power. These demands in fact represented the entire spectrum of Indian people—from financers and businessmen, discontented taxpayers and cultivators to those who had fallen foul of the C.I.D. They showed Gandhi’s senility to the aspirations and needs of the diverse groups he hoped to weld into a unity by leading civil disobedience.⁵ That the demands fell on deaf ears was hardly surprising.

The month of February saw Gandhi and Congress making a strategy to take on the government. Salt was chosen to be the plank on which the new struggle would be unleashed. The abolition of the salt law had been one of the eleven points he had presented to the viceroy.

The plan was brilliantly conceived. In the first place it was not a major threat either to government finances or to Indian vested


⁵ Ibid., pp. 92-93.
interests. Therefore it would also not alienate non-Congressmen who feared attacks on their pockets or a tough fight with the government. It was also believed that since it would not evoke brutal repression it would serve as an educative and a fruitful tactic, thereby in fluxing large number of people into the movement without a fear of harsh reprisals and any great inconvenience. At the same time minus these discrepancies it could be made into a highly emotional issue.⁶

As his ultimatum of 2 March 1930 to the viceroy expired Gandhi now made the final decision in his strategy of showdown with the government. He decided to march from the Sabarmati Ashram with a column of satyagrahis to break the law. By restricting his companions (only men from the ashram would accompany him) and with copies of Bhagvad Gita, the Hindu religious scripture, he would make it a lesson in discipline and non-violence. He made this announcement after completing the prayers at the ashram on 5 March. The date chosen for starting the satyagraha was 12 March.⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru said on Gandhi’s famous march, “Today the pilgrim marches onwards on his long trek......but the fire of a great resolve is in him, and surpassing love of his countrymen, and love of truth that scorches and love of freedom that inspires. And none that passes him can escape

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⁶ Ibid., p. 94.
⁷ Ibid., p. 97.
the spell, and men of common clay feel the spark of life. It is a long journey, for the goal is independence of India.”

Gandhi finally started his march with 78 of his trusted followers, accompanying him, the excitement being generated and novel as the idea was, it deeply stirred the imagination of the people. Finally after 26 days journey (which saw hoards of people greeting him and roads being lovingly stewn with leaves and festooned with banners and flags) he reached Dandi on 6 April 1930 and by picking up a handful of salt, inaugurated the civil disobedience movement which was more widespread and militant in character then the erstwhile non-cooperation movement.

The PCC was also quiet serious about the movement. There was a meeting in Kanpur on 19 January 1930 and it appointed a UP Satyagraha Committee to assess the suitability of the areas for the launching of the movement.

It was Pyarelal Agarwal and Gangadhar Ganesh Jog who first broke the obnoxious law by manufacturing salt in city’s Shraddhanand Park on 5 April 1930. After this there arose a slew of men violating the salt law. This movement saw in Kanpur rise of a new generation

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8 Quoted in B.R. Nanda, op.cit., p. 207.
10 Vartman, 31.3.1930.
of freedom fighters like Mukund Charan Nigam, Badrinath Kapoor, Hamid Khan and firebrand poet Chhail Bihari Dixit ‘Kantak’. On 30 October 1930, ‘Trader’s Day’ was celebrated. A huge rally of small and big traders of the city was organized. It was led by Lala Kamlapat Singhana.\textsuperscript{11}

The breaking of salt law had became a sort of daily activity. On 10 April, a band of ten satyagrahis led by Ganga Sahai Chaubey\textsuperscript{12} broke the salt law while the same was done the next day by Siddha Prasad Arya. The city’s well known leaders were allotted different areas in the city to lead the movement. At times the satyagraha stopped in their way at important public places during procession march and there in the presence of large admiring crowds they broke the salt law by publicly manufacturing salt. Narayan Prasad Arora was city Congress president during the period.\textsuperscript{13}

The greatest display of breaking the salt laws was perhaps witnessed at the Tilak Vyayamshala after the return of the processions, during evening hours. Thousands of cheering and


\textsuperscript{12} Ganga Sahai Chaubey (b. 1895) had resigned from his job during the Home Rule Movement in 1917. He was elected as member of the city Congress Committee in 1923. Was also elevated as secretary of the Congress Seva Dal in 1924. He was given six months imprisonment in 1930 for taking part in the civil disobedience movement, S.P. Bhattacharya, \textit{Swatantra Sangram Ke Sainik}, Lucknow, 1968, p. 358.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Vartman}, 12.4.1930.
enthusiastic people, chanting nationalist slogans added a zest of vigour and satyagrahis would then start the manufacturing of salt.\textsuperscript{14}

The revolutionaries too were carrying on their activities unabated. In January 1930, Bhagwati Charan Vohra had drafted the manifesto of H.S.R.A., \textit{"The Philosophy of Bomb."} Chandrashekhar Azad got it printed in a press near Kanpur. Raghubir Dayal got himself arrested at Generalganj police station by publicly cursing the government. In city’s Jagannath gali (lane) area, Chandrama Singh, a local revolutionary was fired upon by the police. He was subsequently arrested in an injured state and given an imprisonment of seven and a half years. The revolutionaries of those days didn’t believed in useless bloodshed and violence. It was resorted to under very extreme or hopeless situations. This sort of a thing happened in the city in 1930. A very cruel and haughty C.I.D. officer Tika Ram arrived in the city. He let loose a reign of terror and was very harsh towards the revolutionaries. Often he also harassed the youth. The threshold was crossed when he started sending local goons to disturb the women satyagrahis. Ashok Bose, a famous revolutionary of the city fired at him on 2 January 1931 but the notorious officer survived the attack, though this had a demoralizing effect on him. Bose was arrested and sentenced to two years’ imprisonment. After

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.,
he was released he decided to become an ideologue and joined the Communist Party of India. He later left the city for Bundelkhand region to propagate Marxist ideals. He had accepted Radha Mohan Gokul as his mentor.\textsuperscript{15}

The Boycott movement in Kanpur had already started in March 1929. Madan Mohan Malviya visited Kanpur in April 1930. The following day he addressed a large gathering in the city. He exhorted people to carry the boycott of foreign clothes with full vigor. Immediately the action followed and Malviya himself lit a pyre of foreign clothes and other British goods. Alongside the leaders also wanted the people to take a pledge of not using any foreign cloth or any other foreign goods. Women used to take this vow separately.\textsuperscript{16}

A bombshell was thrown by the government with the arrest of Gandhi on the night of 4 May. He was taken to Yervada jail in Poona. This action angered the masses further. Kanpur was famous as the \textit{Manchester of India} and the public bonfire of foreign goods acquired an unprecedented pace. Hasrat Mohani and Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi were very active in seeing that the movement doesn’t dither. A state of unusual frenzy among the people could be judged as they were vying with each other in carrying the boycott

\textsuperscript{15} Arvind Arora, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Vartman}, 14.4.1930.
programme. Two famous mill owners of the city Lala Bal Kishan Maheshwari and Lala Manohar Lal Agarwal supported the movement by giving away a large stock of saris and other foreign clothes. So much enthusiasm was there that after the burning of these clothes, the satyagrahis put the ashes to sale.\textsuperscript{17}

Schools and colleges in the city were flying the Congress flags and portraits of Gandhi. Significantly in city’s Town Hall, the swaraj flag was flying for the past two or three years and city’s municipal office was situated in the Town Hall. The inspector of schools, Allahabad Division noted with disdain the flying of swaraj flag at Middle School in city’s Narwal area. (It was at Narwal only where the headquarters of Vidhyarthi’s Youth League were situated) The officer asked the headmaster to remove the flag which the latter did. The officer was inspecting only those schools in the district which were not flying the flags. He was in fact doing the inspection to release grant for the schools. Those schools where the swaraj flags were flying or were boycotting their studies were not to be considered for grant.\textsuperscript{18}

The firebrand poet Kantak was very active in the Civil Disobedience Movement. He used to recite poems on public meetings

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 8.5.1930.

\textsuperscript{18} Education Department, File No. 53/1930, UPSA.
which were most unpleasing to the government. In 1930 only, for writing three seditious poems he was given three years imprisonment. However due to the efforts and clarifications presented by Govind Ballabh Pant and Mohan Lal Saxena to the government against making arrests in such cases, Kantak’s sentence was reduced to one year. It has been said that he was the first poet of the country to have been arrested by the British government for writing a poem glorifying independence and cursing the alien rule. Two lines of the poem are *Zalim sarkar mitaayenge, Bharat swadheen karayenge; Vedi par sheesh chadhayenge, Hum bali devi par jaayenge*; (We will finish this tyrant government and make the nation free. We will sacrifice our lives for it.)¹⁹

1930 as a year of upheaval it was, the government decided to prosecute Ram Shankar Awasthi, publisher and editor of *Vartaman* newspaper for severely criticizing the assault on the satyagrahis at Dharsana salt works in Gujarat.²⁰ The newspaper reported of some very inhuman and barbaric acts on the part of the police (like one

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²⁰ The famous Dharsana salt raid took place on May 21, 1930. Sarojini Naidu, Imam Saheb, Gandhi’s friend in South Africa and Manilal, Gandhi’s son lead a march of 2000 satyagrahis towards the police cardon that had sealed off the Dharsana salt works. As they came nearer the police force brutally attacked them with the result that many were severely injured.
satyagrahi was made naked by a European seargent and a stick was thrust into his anus. Another allegation made was of a European officer resorting to pricking a young man with babool thorns). The newspaper in fact made a severe indictment of British rule and exhorted the people to intensify their struggle (particularly of boycott). The newspaper had reported that, “It is the Englishman and not the Indian who is impatient for peace. Congressmen cannot yield for peace for they know that they must sacrifice 5 or 10 lakhs of lives before they can reach the temple of liberty. The government can yield because all its weapons have been proving ineffective. It has not the courage to administer such a big country with a population of 31 crores by means of martial law on the strength of seventy or eighty thousand of British soldiers. Every Englishman knows what loss has already been inflicted upon England through the boycott movement. Who can purchase sixty crores worth of cloth, three crores worth of cigarettes and twenty one crores worth of other commodities except subject India? It is thus the Englishmen who are impatient for peace, knowing as they do not otherwise incalculable harm will be done to their trade.”

21 Home Police Department, File No. 1030/1930, UPSA. On the outbreak of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 press restrictions were again tightened under the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931. It gave sweeping powers to the District Magistrate to control any publication which in his opinion constituted incitement to violence. The general tendency of these measures was to completely gag the expression of opinion against the government, Bankey Bihari Misra, The Administrative History of India 1834-1947, Bombay, 1970, p. 560.
The Civil Disobedience movement was gaining momentum in Kanpur and there was an intense fervor and excitement among the people. People from all shades of life were contributing in their own manner to the struggle. While top leaders were the guiding souls, the torch bearers were the ordinary folk and people like Kantak and Pyarelal Agarwal who considered it their bounden duty to carry on the satyagraha.

Gaya Prasad Bharati, secretary of the Congress Committee Nawabganj had written a seditious pamphlet in July 1930, entitled ‘Ran Nimantaran’ (Invitation To Join The War) which was also (like Vartman’s reporting) a severe critique of British rule, the catastrophe it had brought on numerous farmers, how it had bruised Indian pride, created divisions between Hindus and Muslims etc. It was also harsh on those Indians who were the collaborators with the British in all these manoeuvres and who had made themselves servants of the foreigners.22 The pamphlet was an igniting one and did make the people violent and Nawabganj and adjoining areas saw people offering satyagraha.

When arrests related with the salt satyagraha had stopped the city Congress committee decided to boycott the sale of alcohol especially the foreign ones. Women were very active and when

22 Home Police Department, File No. 1385/1930, UPSA.
satyagraha week was being celebrated in the city a procession of around 20,000 women was taken out under the guidance of Uma Nehru. Such a mammoth gathering of women in Kanpur was not witnessed since then and until now. In May only the provincial session of the Congress took place in the city under the presidency of Pt. Sundarlal of Allahabad. Madan Mohan Malviya and Motilal Nehru also had participated in the conference.23

By July 1930 the repression of the satyagrahis had also reached its culmination and all top leaders of the Congress like Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had been arrested. Gandhi had already been arrested on May 4. The policy of wanton arrests, issuing ordinances, of curbing the civil liberties of the people was ruthlessly followed and provincial governments were given the freedom to ban associations connected with the civil disobedience. All these measures plus that there was no mention of Dominion Status when Simon Commission report was published disturbed the most moderate voices of the movement. Madan Mohan Malviya and M.S. Aney courted arrest. The Viceroy on 9 July suggested a Round Table Conference and reiterated the goal of Dominion Status. Hectic parleys between members of the Central Legislature and Viceroy opened a new window to arrive at some

concord. M.R. Jayakar and Tej Bahadur Sapru were the front ranking men in these parleys and a Round Table Conference took place in November in London. It was well understood by the British MPs that without taking into consideration the Congress, no scheme of constitutional advance would work in India. Following this Irwin ordered release of Gandhi on 25 January 1931.\footnote{Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, K.N. Panikkar & Sucheta Mahajan, op.cit., pp. 279-280.}

**Representing 1931**

The year 1931 is an important one in the history of modern India. Civil Disobedience movement had taken a low ebb by August 1930. With the release of Gandhi in January there was considerable amount of hope and excitement. Irwin was quite sensitive and a man of great temperance.\footnote{Judith Brown says that although an aristocrat and a Tory Lord Irwin, was nonetheless sympathetic towards the political aspirations of Indians and keenly aware that the empire would only survive if it was founded on a broad span of agreement and cooperation, Cf. Judith Brown, op.cit., p. 178.}

After many days of debating with the delegates who had returned from London and with other leaders across the political spectrum, Gandhi finally decided to initiate discussions with the Viceroy, the culmination of which was the famous Gandhi-Irwin pact, signed on 25 March 1931. Sarojini Naidu hailed the pact as ‘Meeting of the two Mahatmas’ (Gandhi and Irwin). The terms of the pact
included immediate release of all political prisoners not convicted for violence, the remission of all fines not yet collected, sympathetic treatment with those government employees who had resigned. Even the demand of the right to make salt for consumption to villages along the coast and for peaceful picketing was considered.²⁶

However signing of the pact was not an entirely merry making affair for a vast section of the Indian people. Plea for the commutation of death sentences for Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev was rejected and the trio were hanged on 23 March 1931.

Kanpur being a prominent centre of revolutionaries was aggrieved and the local Congress committee decided to observe a hartal on the morning of 24 March as a mark of protest against the tragedy.²⁷

The progress of the foreign cloth hartals across UP had a certain Hindu tinge whilst they were being carried out. Some Muslims in UP were marginalized by the organizational arrangements of the hartals- which were often based upon ideas and infrastructures

²⁷ The agitation in favour of Bhagat Singh commenced on the 7th of March when a meeting to call for the young man’s release was held at the Marwari High School and attended mainly by students. It was decided to collect signatures for a petition for mercy. On March 20 it became known that the Viceroy had rejected the petition for mercy and a procession was announced for the next day, Home Police Dept, File No. 1263/1931, UPSA.
which used religious rhetoric. Another factor was of isolation that linked Congress’s hartals to a disregard for the sectional interests of Muslims in UP. In Kanpur, Allahabad and Banaras, feelings of victimization overlapped with fears of commercial advantage between cloth traders of different communities.\(^{28}\)

Gandhi had refigured the symbolism of cloth. The notion of giving impetus to home spin cloth was re-emphasized as a moral and religious duty. Religious and magical aspects of clothing were brought out in the notion that the wearing of European luxury goods could be regarded as ‘sinful’. More important was the acceptance of spinning by Gandhians as an act of prayer which allowed the individual to be purged of sin. And this was a set of symbols more easily associated with non-Muslim worship. Even a senior and Kanpur’s respected Congress leader Narayan Prasad Arora had declared that Hindus should refuse to remain in slavery like their Muslim brethren by selling foreign cloth.\(^{29}\)

Muslims in Kanpur and elsewhere were hardly enthusiastic about the movement and their participation in the movement was nowhere as compared to the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements.


\(^{29}\) Ibid., pp. 102-104.
The decision to observe hartal and to order a closure of all shops proved to be a devastating storm as a fierce communal riot occurred in the city.

Muslims of the Meston Road area resisted the attempts of Congressmen to enforce a hartal. They refused to close their shops and fracas turned into violence. Parties of angry Hindus and Muslims were standing in each of the side lanes but the police on the spot appeared to have stopped the fighting and to held the situation in check. This was the situation at 3 p.m. At about 5 p.m. fighting again broke out and it spread to other mohallas. The riot had started. After the starting at Meston road and Moolganj the rioting intensified very rapidly to Sadar Bazaar, Patkapur, Colonelganj and Sisamau the next day. Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi decided to play the role of a peace keeper knowing well his life would be in peril. On 25 March at about 11 a.m. he reached Bengalee Mohal locality which was a very disturbed area and tried to quell the rioters. Immediately he was attacked by a riotous mob with spears, daggers, brickbats and other weapons. He was killed on that day in the afternoon amidst doing rescue work.30

30 Home Police Dept, File No. 1263/1931, UPSA.
For three days the city burnt with ghastly atrocities on the part of both the communities. The government estimated the number of those killed and injured at 290 and 965 respectively.\(^{31}\)

Syed Yusuf Ali, a member of the legislative assembly reprimanded the government and asked why there was an inadequate police force in Kanpur on 24 and 25 March. Zahur Ahmad, another member asked J.C. Smith, finance member that why the military was posted in civil lines and not in the city. Smith had no answer to the question. Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain asked that when it was fairly clear (after seeing the hartal on 23 March) that an attempt to create a larger disturbance will be made the next day why no strong measures were taken by the city administration. C.Y. Chintamani said in the assembly, “There has been a general practice in these communal riots to avoid arrests as far as possible and it is a fact that practice was followed in Kanpur until special instructions to the contrary were given.\(^{32}\)

The newspaper *Hindustan Times* also severely criticized the government in its ineffectiveness to control the riot. It made a sarcastic comment that in Delhi, if a few stones are thrown on the car of a police officer it is considered a sufficient justification for

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\(^{31}\) Ibid.,

\(^{32}\) Ibid.,
terrifying the whole populace by display of machine guns and by indiscriminate firing in bazaars and streets on peaceful crowds. But on occasions when communities come into conflict as happened in Kanpur these very guardians of law and order become suddenly powerless.  

The seriousness of Kanpur was such that for many it continued to resonate in political comment and discussion across UP and India.  

Haldhar Vajpayee also deserves a special mention here. As soon as he heard that Muslims were assembling in the mosque of Patkapur he immediately reached there and asked what happened? The assembled people replied that Hindus from the nearby Bihari temple were making preparations to attack them and so they had taken shelter in the mosque and were also trying to prepare themselves. Haldhar assured them that there is no such gathering taking place at the temple. In fact by clearing the doubts of Muslims he prevented the fire of riot in spreading to other areas. In these times only many people were cut to pieces and were thrown into the well at Ram Narayan bazaar. The police was reluctant in entering into the well. But Haldhar was a man of different streak. He decided to go into

33 *Hindustan Times*, 30.3.1931.  
the well and helped in bringing out the bodies thrown inside the well.\textsuperscript{35}

After the violence had been contained in the city there was a general agreement among all shades of people that police showed indifference and inactivity in dealing with various incidents in the riot. These witnesses include European businessmen, Muslims and Hindus of all shades of opinion, military officers, representatives of the Indian Christian community and even Indian officials. The burning of the temple at Meston road and of two mosques (Bazaza and Sarrafa) that caused that sudden fury of passion which swept the riot out of control and carried it with unprecedented speed out into the farthest quarters of the city. The District Magistrate John Ford Sale failed to control the violence and was charged with incompetence.\textsuperscript{36}

Howsoever heinous the crime may be and how rampaging and ferocious people can became at times, yet a time comes when things calm down and normalcy again acquires its place. On 6 April after the opening of bazaars in the city, Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Azad and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj arrived at Pratap office. They also visited the house of Vidhyarthi and paid condolences to the bereaved family.


\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Pioneer}, 3.6.1931. (Cited in File No. 1263/1931.)
The leaders then made a tour of the city and on their appeal both Hindu and Muslim traders who had still not opened their shops now decided to re-open them. People who were suspected of being complicit in the riots and other mischief mongers were continued to be arrested.\footnote{Pratap, 12.4.1931.}

In the mid 1930s only some well known and respected people of the city tried to foster Hindu-Muslim unity by bringing the people of two religions in closer contact and established an organization \textit{Hindustani Biradri} (Indian Community). This organization in fact became the common platform for both the communities. The two people who played most prominent role in its establishment were Pt. Mathura Prasad Vajpayee and Murtaza Hussain Abidi. It did commendable work in trying to restore confidence and brotherhood between the members of the two communities after the horrendous riots of 1931.\footnote{Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 144.}

When the riot had stopped and life returned to normal, people were perplexed and had became more community conscious. The riot had been a blot and the division between Congress and the Muslims was further escalated.
There was also some speculation about the frequenting of rogue elements to prostitute houses. Prostitutes were numerous in the city and they were mainly concentrated in the central localities. Their presence near the areas which saw severe rioting disturbed the government and a proposal was put forward to locate all prostitutes in Nazirbagh area and make all other areas of the city prohibited for them.  

But the District Magistrate of city strongly opposed it and said that Nazirbagh is very near to Bakenganj area where severe rioting had took place in 1931. Muslims opposed their rehabilitation here while Hindus supported it thereby clearly depicting the polarization on communal lines. However the scheme was not considered worth following as it was not possible at that time to move prostitutes of Nazirbagh Ghosiana.  

In mid-1931 the CWC decided to establish an expert and trained body which was to devote itself to certain activities specified in a newly drafted set of rules. It was resolved that the Hindustani Seva Dal would be the central volunteer organization of the Congress, to be called the Congress Seva Dal. Each province would

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39 Home Municipal Department, File No. 43IT/1931, UPSA.
40 Ibid.,
appoint a general officer commanding its provincial Seva Dal. Its functions were outlined as follows:

i) It shall act as a duty authorized institution for the training of officers and instructors.

ii) It shall lend the services of officers and instructors for provinces at the latter’s expense.

iii) It shall have power to form volunteer corps in provinces wherever so required by Provincial Congress Committees (PCC’s).

The Dals would consist of three sections: children (bal), boys and girls (kumars and kumaris) and adults (proudhas). The seva dals were to take a pledge laid down by the CWC to hold aloof from all party politics within the Congress. Elaborate rules and a training programme were drawn up. In UP a training scheme was prepared by the Kashi Vidhyapeeth and provincial Seva Dal together, and in August a six month training camp began in Banaras. The course included a series of over a hundred lectures on subjects as varied as Indian history, the labour movement, cleanliness and health. Some of the Congress’s best known intellectuals participated as teachers. Volunteers were also given physical training and education in

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spinning and propaganda techniques. To begin with one worker from every District Congress Committee (DCC) in the province took the course.\(^\text{42}\)

The programme of boycott of foreign cloth was perhaps the most visible activity in the city. This programme was gaining momentum since the hey days of the Non Cooperation and Khilafat movements. Most of the traders of Kanpur had put Congress’ seal on their stock of foreign cloth. But there were few aberrations. One Lala Badrima Bagria was seen sending his stock of foreign cloth from his godown near Chartered Bank in Generalganj area on 23 February. Congress volunteers tried to stop the cart on which the stock was laden. At this a police officer posted in the area started assaulting one volunteer and he got injured. He was profusely bleeding and soon a large crowd had gathered. They resented Lala’s act of selling his stock of foreign cloth and soon one of the stocks was put to fire. However by this time many other Congress workers had arrived on the spot and they extinguished the fire. It was decided to sent back the stockpile to the godown. Next day Lala again tried to sell it and Congress workers again came in opposition and soon arrests started of Congress workers. Bhagvati Prasad, city Congress secretary,

Prayag Narayan, leader of volunteers and Gangadhar Ganesh Jog were arrested.\textsuperscript{43}

Soon a huge crowd had assembled in the area and 136 arrests were made in the day. On 25 February a massive public meeting was organized near the place where construction of Tilak hall was going on. People expressed their solidarity with the people who were arrested and a hartal was observed the whole day. Picketing continued near Lala’s godown in Generalganj.\textsuperscript{44}

The Congress convened its forty-sixth session in Karachi under the presidency of Vallabhbhai Patel. A resolution was passed in respect of the Kanpur communal riots and a fact finding committee was formed to enquire about the same. It consisted of Bhagwan Das (chairman), Purshottam Das Tandon, Khwaja Abdul Majid, Tasadduq Khan Sherwani, Maulana Zafrul Mulk and Sir Sundarlal. After the Presidential addresses were delivered three resolutions were moved from the chair and passed. The first one was of condolence on the death of Maulana Mohammed Ali, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Maulvi Mazhar-ul-Haq. The second one was on the going communal strife in Kanpur and the third one was on the declaration of fundamental rights. A heart touching tribute was paid to Ganesh Shankar

\textsuperscript{43} Pratap, 1.3.1931.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.,
Vidhyarthi. It run as follows: “This Congress deplores the communal strife that is going on in Kanpur and that has resulted in large number of deaths and even a large number of injured. The Congress tenders its respectful sympathy to the families of the deceased and the injured. The Congress notes with deep grief the news of the death during the strife, of Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi, President United Provinces Congress Committee (UPCC) who was one of the most selfless among national workers and who by his freedom from communal bias has endeared himself to all parties and communities. While tending condolence to the family of the deceased the Congress notes with pride that a prominent worker of the first rank was found sacrificing his precious life in the attempt to rescue those in danger and restore peace and sanity in the midst of strife and insanity.”

But perhaps the most important resolution passed in the session was on the declaration of Fundamental Rights (moved by Mahatma Gandhi.) The following is the text

“This Congress is of opinion that to enable the masses to appreciate what “Swaraj” as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them. In order to end the exploitation of

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the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of
the starving millions.” The Fundamental Rights of the people were to
be upheld which included:

i) Freedom of association and combination.

ii) Freedom of speech and of the press.

iii) Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice
of religion subject to political order and morality.

iv) Protection of culture, language and scripts of the minorities.

v) Equal rights and obligations of all citizens without any bar
on account of sex.

vi) No person shall be deprived of his liberty nor shall his
dwelling or property be entered, sequestered or confiscated,
save in accordance with law.\(^47\)

Equally important was the drafting of the National Economic
Programme which promised substantial reduction in rent and revenue,
exemption from rent in case of uneconomic holdings and relief of
agricultural indebtedness and control of usury; better conditions for
workers including a living wage, limited hours of work; the right to
organize and form unions to workers and peasants and state
ownership or control of key industries, mines and means of transport.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., pp. 185-186.
In fact the Karachi resolution was to serve as the guiding light to Congress’s basic political and economic programme of later years.\(^{48}\)

The CWC endorsed the Gandhi-Irwin pact and it was agreed that Gandhi attend the Second Round Table Conference in London in September. Lord Irwin had already left India in mid April and Willingdon succeeded him as the new Viceroy.

The Second Round Table Conference ended in a fiasco as the British government refused to concede the basic national demand for freedom on the basis of the immediate grant of Dominion Status.

For many British officials the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had been a bitter pill, the pact did not alter the basic fact that the Congress was pledged to liquidate the British Indian Empire. The fact that the Congress under Gandhi’s leadership eschewed the use of force did not seem to make much difference to those who considered non-violence a sort of disguise.\(^{49}\)

**The Second Civil Disobedience Campaign**

By the time Gandhi returned to India on 28 December the political conditions had changed sharply. There had been a spate of terrorist attacks in Bengal. Civil Disobedience had resumed in NWFP and a no rent campaign was escalating in UP. As a consequence


\(^{49}\) B.R. Nanda, op.cit., p. 219.
early in December 1931 emergency Powers Ordinances were promulgated in Bengal, NWFP and UP. Gandhi on his return was to be told that if he seeks an audience with the Viceroy, the same should be refused so long the no-rent campaign goes on. And if Congress lends support to these agitations it would have to face the consequences.\textsuperscript{50}

Gandhi did seek an audience but the conditions placed before him were impossible for him to accept and the CWC under Gandhi’s stewardship thereupon resolved to reinstitute country wide civil disobedience, forthwith.\textsuperscript{51}

Willingdon had the reputation of a firm and hot headed administrator. Within a few hours of the arrest of Gandhi and other CWC members on January 4, a series of ordinances were promulgated. Not only the working committee but the provincial committees and innumerable local Congress committees were declared illegal, a number of organizations allied or sympathetic towards the Congress such as Youth Leagues, National Schools, Congress libraries and hospitals were also outlawed. Congress funds were confiscated;


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.,
Congress buildings were occupied and almost every possible measure was taken to prevent the Congress from functioning.\footnote{B.R. Nanda, op.cit., p.221.}

The second civil disobedience movement was carried with a new vigor in Kanpur and saw en masse participation of women and uneducated people. The forms of defiance included picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops, closing of markets and boycott of English or loyalist business concerns, symbolic hoisting of Congress flags, salt satyagraha and non-payment of taxes.

There was a complete dismay and anger over the new ordinances promulgated by the government. A massive gathering of about 15,000 people took place at city’s Mall Road area against the ordinances and they shouted slogans like ‘Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai, Vande Mataram etc. Public meetings were held in different localities of the city like Generalganj, Hoolaganj and Gills Bazaar. Gangadhar Ganesh Jog was spearheading the movement and whilst a meeting was going on in Kunjilal temple, he was arrested. Curfew was ordered in the city but the satyagrahis were not afraid. Even though army had been called in the city and police was armoured with heavy machine guns, the zeal and tempo of satyagrahis couldn’t be curtailed.\footnote{Vartman, 7.1.1932.}
Arrest of Gandhi in January made matters worse for the administration. A crowd of 4,000 people attacked the police party with *lathis*, bricks and other things. Police resorted to severe repression in which hoards of people were injured. A Congress procession carrying flags was stopped by the police and five Congress leaders were arrested including Chunnilal Garg, Mannilal Awasthi and Narayan Prasad Arora. The main motive of these leaders was to hoist these flags on numerous government buildings and public places. Once again zealots like Balkrishna Sharma and Kantak (both were also gifted poets) were arrested for preaching violence against the government.\(^{54}\)

It has already been known that it was in the civil disobedience movement that women first came out in large numbers and it marked their arrival in the freedom struggle. In Kanpur also this was the scenario. Protests that followed saw women turning up in large numbers. Tara Agarwal, Maharani Devi Awasthi, Begum Hasrat Mohani courted arrests themselves.\(^{55}\)

The movement reached its crescendo on 26 January 1932 (which had been declared Independence Day in 1930). Auspicious for satyagrahis as the day was they left no stone unturned to celebrate it

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 18.1.1932.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 14.1.1932.
with gusto. Tricolors were posted on telephone and electricity poles, trees, on houses and on various other buildings. Flag salutation ceremony used to take place. Many schools and colleges of the city including Nayaganj Bharatiya Vidhyalaya celebrated it despite government’s stern warning.⁵⁶

Picketing so marked in the first civil disobedience was again revived. The boycott of foreign cloth had been a resounding success in Kanpur, yet there were still some traders who were not at all in tandem with the khadi and continued dealing in foreign cloth. Before picketing was started the local Congress committee organized a Foreign Cloth Boycott conference. It distributed many leaflets, bulletins, hand bills appealing for the boycott of foreign cloth. Picketing started in January continued for a year and a half. There were widespread clashes between Congress workers and the police.⁵⁷ Narayan Prasad Arora who is chiefly credited with organizing the civil disobedience movement in the city was arrested and was given a jail sentence of six months. He was kept in Gonda jail and his inmates there included Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Purshottam Das Tandon.⁵⁸

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⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.1.1932.
⁵⁷ Ibid.,
Yet as Bipan Chandra says that the capacity of the masses to carry on the struggle is not endless, their endurance in time of brutal repression has its limitations and they need a breathing space after persistently carrying on a struggle applies here also.

The second civil disobedience movement generated less enthusiasm in general. The rich peasant groups, who had shown greater militancy during the first phase of the movement felt betrayed by its withdrawal and remained aloof in many places, such as coastal Andhra, Gujarat and UP, where the Congress leaders wanted to mobilize them the second time. The much talked Harijan campaign of Gandhi simply didn’t appealed to higher castes and on the contrary evoked hostile response.\(^59\) This programme became a principal concern of Gandhi in September 1932 after the famous ‘Communal Award’ was announced by Ramsay Macdonald, the British Prime Minister on 4 August 1932.\(^60\)

Gandhi bitter at its announcement declare to ‘fast unto death’ in jail unless the decision of granting separate electorates for the Depressed classes is not revoked.

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\(^{60}\) The Communal Award provided for separate electorates for the minority communities including Muslims, Sikhs and Depressed classes (Dalits).
Kanpur expressed both its solidarity and concern for the Mahatma. Many meetings took place and a lot of temples were declared opened for the Harijans. The Harijan upliftment programme took a fillip and lots of Congress workers and local leaders who had been released from jail, decided to carry out the welfare programme. They were not desirous to go to jail again. It were these very people who organized a swadeshi exhibition (under the aegis of Swadeshi League) in city’s Balika Vidhyalaya.\(^{61}\) The inauguration of the exhibition was done by Maulana Azad Subhani.\(^{62}\)

Meanwhile Gandhi’s decision of fast unto death made the government modify its stand on the Communal Award and he was able to secure agreement between caste Hindus and Dalit leaders (who were led by B.R. Ambedkar) known as the Poona Pact which took place on 24 September at Yervada jail in Poona.\(^{63}\)

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\(^{61}\) Mathura Prasad Vajpayee was secretary of the *Swadeshi League* which was set up with the efforts of Balkrishna Sharma, Jawaharlal Rohatgi, Naval Kishore Bharati and Uma Shankar Mehrotra, Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., pp. 145-146.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., p. 197.

\(^{63}\) The British had provided however for the Award’s amendment if the interested Indian communities agreed, and when news of Gandhi’s fast became public Sir Harry Haig, the then Home Secretary astutely announced that Gandhi would be released for its duration. This Gandhi rejected. The Govt. nevertheless provided full facilities to those who then negotiated with him by which joint electorates for Harijans were agreed, whereupon the fast was called off, D.A. Low, op.cit., p. 181.
Signs of exhaustion had become visible in the movement from August 1932 onwards. Many leaders had left the city while some were still in their infancy. A number of bogus and selfish men had also joined the movement and they created roadblocks. G.G. Jog, Ganga Sahai Chaubey and Gopinath Singh still carried on the work and were sent to jail. Those who were already languishing in jails like Kantak, Pyarelal Agarwal and Murari Lal Rohatgi developed health problems.64

The Government of India was still quite determined to have no dealings with Gandhi, or with any of his associates, over anything to do with civil disobedience. This they forcefully demonstrated by declaring a bold attempt of the Congress to hold its session in Calcutta in March 1933 as illegal. But the government always had the apprehension of British Cabinet forcing it to do something to mitigate the ongoing conflict in India.65

The session was held in Calcutta but was swiftly dispersed without any concrete decision. Many representatives had gone from Kanpur to attend it. One Prakash Narayan Saxena who had publicly teared the notice (which had declared the session illegal) and who had rendered exemplary services in the ongoing movement, went to

64 Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., pp. 197-198.
65 D.A. Low, op.cit., p. 216.
Calcutta and courted arrest. Fakirchand Punjabi was beaten to pulp in the session by the police which resulted in a severe fracture.⁶⁶

Amidst all this Gandhi in May 1933 finally decided to launch a very spectacular attempt to press the British to soften their stand. Using the facilities government had allowed to him, he had in February begun to edit from his prison a newspaper called *Harijan*. He now announced he would embark on a three week fast that would have nothing to do with civil disobedience, but would be solely directed against the existence of untouchability in Indian society. He was consequently released on 8 May. The British tried to project his release as a humanitarian gesture. Gandhi issued a statement immediately after his release that was not confined to Harijan issue but spoke of the need for the release of all prisoners arrested during the civil disobedience movement.⁶⁷

Congress leaders and workers in Kanpur decided to engaged themselves in Gandhi’s Harijan welfare programme. The Harijan Sevak Sangh (established in October 1932), became very active. Meetings and conferences for Harijans started taking place, temples were declared open for them, a pledge was undertaken that talked of carrying out their upliftment. The main work was done among city’s

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⁶⁶ Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., p. 198.
sweepers. Their living spaces were checked and economic condition of every family was ascertained and pressure was mounted on the city municipal corporation to make quarters for their living and more facilities should be provided to them so that they can perform their task effectively. The main work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Kanpur was done by Jawaharlal Rohatgi, Pyarelal Agarwal, Shiv Narayan Tandon and Sri Prakash Narayan Saxena.68

Gandhi now released made an appeal to the government to withdrew the ordinance and release all the political prisoners.69 But the Viceroy was unrelenting. The movement already showing signs of exhaustion was suspended but those who had the fight still left in them were advised to offer “Individual Civil Disobedience”. Fakirchand Punjabi was the first satyagrahi of Kanpur who went to jail while doing the individual satyagraha. In October 1933, Jawaharlal Nehru was released from Naini jail and this caused much enthusiasm among the people. After all he was the second most popular leader of the freedom struggle after Gandhi. A conference of Congress workers was organized in the city in November in which Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Kripalani and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai

68 Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., pp. 198-199.
69 When in mid- 1932 the Emergency Power Ordinances were due for renewal, they were consolidated into a single Special Powers Ordinance, while steps were taken to pass central and provincial legislation before the end of the year to make this part of the regular law of land, D.A. Low (ed.), Congress and the Raj, op.cit., p. 177.
addressed them and asked them to remain vigilant and steadfast in their endeavor to fight for their country’s independence. The Swadeshi League organized a second exhibition of Khadi cloth in Khurd Mahal Park. The League also presented a memento to Nehru.\(^{70}\)

On 26 January 1934, Gopinath Singh, Sri Prakash Narayan Saxena and Shivaram Pandey were arrested and were sentenced to two and a half years in jail. Sri Prakash Narayan Saxena was also severely beaten up by the police which resulted in a complete impairment of his left ear.\(^{71}\)

When a severe earthquake had devastated Bihar in January 1934, Rajendra Prasad appealed for help and Kanpur sent twenty thousand rupees (which was collected with the help of the Congress workers) to the Central Relief Committee.\(^{72}\) It reflects that the city of Kanpur was not only active in political matters but it had also shown an exemplary gesture in other matters also.

Balkrishna Sharma ‘Naveen’ was editor of the *Pratap* newspaper during the course of the civil disobedience movement. The newspaper was boldly articulating the nationalist message and carrying it to common man and therefore the authorities were peeved at seeing the tempo that was among the masses as *Pratap* was a

\(^{70}\) Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., pp. 199-200.

\(^{71}\) Ibid.,

\(^{72}\) Ibid., p. 201.
much read paper. Consequently a fine of rupees 3000 was imposed on it and the editor Naveen was sentenced one year rigorous imprisonment.\textsuperscript{73}

By March 1934, Civil Disobedience had faded out. Gandhi resigned his membership of the Congress at the Bombay session in October 1934. He held out the assurance that his advice and guidance would be available whenever necessary but he never again joined the Congress formally.\textsuperscript{74} It can be said that his retirement was an equally emphatic assertion that he would only lead when he felt he could do so on his own terms.

In April satyagraha was suspended. Congress committees at provincial and district levels were once again declared legal. To conduct the election for the various posts of City Congress Committee, Govind Ballabh Pant himself came. There occurred a scuffle between the leaders which resulted in one group distancing

\textsuperscript{73} Home Police Department, File No. 1175/1934, UPSA. \textit{Pratap} was regularly publishing articles glorifying the freedom struggle by anonymous authors. It was propounding Congress views and betraying socialist leanings. After Naveen’s arrest it was being published and edited by Yugal Kishore Singh. The weekly circulation of the newspaper had shot to 8000 while daily edition was about 5000.

\textsuperscript{74} Gandhi felt that a large section of the intelligentsia favoured parliamentary politics with which he was in disagreement. Another section of the same showed no great enthusiasm for his Harijan upliftment programme based as it was on religious and moral approach. Hence he announced his resignation, Bipan Chandra, op.cit., pp. 315-316.
itself from the city Congress committee. Guru Raghubir Dayal was chosen president of the city Congress, but he resigned after a few days and Pandit Sri Ratan Shukla was elected as president. Until now Narayan Prasad Arora was holding the charge. Election to the municipal corporation was held in 1935. After much internal fighting some candidates were announced by the Congress. But only Hariharnath Shastri, Sri Ratan Shukla and Devi Sahai Vajpayee emerged victorious. Those who lost included Balkrishna Sharma ‘Naveen’, Gangadhar Ganesh Jog and Chhail Bihari Dixit ‘Kantak’. In the election held for the District Board, Congress got eleven members elected but was still short of a majority.\textsuperscript{75}

On 25 June 1934 someone tried to hurl a bomb on Gandhi while he was on his way to address a meeting in Poona. But instead of felling on its car the bomb fell on another car and about seven people got injured. Gandhi however escaped unharmed. To condemn the ghastly act a public meeting was called in Kanpur on 25 June at 7 p.m. in Shraddhanand Park. It was presided by Murarilal Rohatgi and the resolution of condemnation was passed by Narayan Prasad Arora. The resolution was supported by others including Balkrishna Sharma, G. G. Jog, Jagdamba Prasad ‘Hitaishi’, Ram Dulare Trivedi

\textsuperscript{75} Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., pp. 201-202.
etc. The newspaper *Pratap* also took up the issue and severely indicted the government and local officials for attack on Gandhi.\(^{76}\)

One Dev Narayan Pandey voted against the resolution in the meeting which created some disturbance but otherwise the whole affair was smooth.\(^{77}\)

Gandhi visited Kanpur for the last time in July and was in the city for four days (from June 22 to 26). To honour Gandhi, the Municipal Corporation and District Board presented him a memento. He kept a fast on 23 July and also addressed a large gathering of students in Phoolbagh. He also visited some twenty-five Dalit *bastis* and inaugurated the famous Tilak Hall in city’s Meston Road area, which till today is the hub of city Congress’s programmes.\(^{78}\) During this period he had stayed at the house of Jawaharlal Rohatgi. A goat was arranged for him as he was fond of drinking goat milk and when Gandhi was leaving the city the auction of goat took place and it was sold for 101 rupees. While he was staying Gandhi used to take a walk from the bungalow towards Mall Road (now known as Mahtma Gandhi road) at about 4 or 5 p.m.\(^{79}\)

\(^{76}\) Home Police Dept. File No. 1175/1934, UPSA. Also see *Pratap*, 28.6.1934.

\(^{77}\) Ibid.,


\(^{79}\) Jawaharlal Rohatgi’s bungalow served as guest house for many nationalists who visited Kanpur. Prominent ones included Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalchari, Govind Ballabh Pant, Jayprakash Narayan and
When in 1936 delegates to the Lucknow Congress were to be elected, one Sri Prakash was appointed as the returning officer and he arrived in Kanpur. Battle lines were drawn between the two groups but at the last moment better sense prevailed and it was agreed to send three members from both the groups. For elections to the city Congress committee Shibban Lal Saxena was appointed as the returning officer by the DCC. His role was not impartial as he unanimously declared the representatives of Raghubir Dayal group to have been elected. This partial decision was stoutly opposed and the matter was placed before the Provincial Control Board of the Congress and after months of deliberations and discussions, the election was declared null and void and at last a compromise was reached between the two groups. Govind Ballabh Pant, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and Narayan Prasad Arora were the main trouble shooters.80

The fading of the civil disobedience movement was not a loss for the Congress and Kanpur. Although the goal of complete independence was not realized yet the hardships which satyagrahis went through and that simple acts of violation (like making salt) could sent shivers down the government’s spine, plus that the boycott had been made more effective were signals of the new dynamism

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and courage people had acquired. The government though became repressive and indifferent to nationalist’ demands yet it also believed that the Indian masses had acquired maturity and can try new ways to make their just struggle strong.

The Golden Jubilee of the Congress was celebrated in the year 1935. Leaders made appeal to the public to gave their support to make the celebration a success. Civil Disobedience had been called off a year earlier but it was noted with pride that Kanpur was second to none in the heroic struggle and had the maximum convictions and arrests estimated at 5000. The Congress had already formed various committees for conducting the celebrations smoothly. The whole city was beautifully lighted on 28 December 1935 as if the entire city is celebrating Diwali the Hindu festival of lights. Even Muslims also participated in significant numbers to make the event successful. Many mosques of the city were also illuminated.\textsuperscript{81}

In 1936 only many students were enlisted to form an organization called ‘Students Union’ under the chairmanship of Tulsi Prasad Srivastava. The motto of the organization was “Freedom, Peace and Development” (“Swadheenta, Shanti tatha Pragati”) and by 1940 it had 1300 members enrolled. Chhail Bihari Dixit ‘Kantak’ succeeded Tulsi Prasad as the chairman. Under his aegis the

\textsuperscript{81} Vartman, 28.12.1935.
organization carried the work of implanting robust nationalism amongst the youth.\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{The Government Of India Act and the Formation of Congress Ministry}

The Government Of India Act 1935, provided for the establishment of a Federation of Governor’s Provinces and Indian states, of diarchy at the centre, and responsible government in the provinces. For the purpose of redistribution of functions a distinction was naturally drawn between the authority of the Crown in British India, exercisable through the Governor-General, and that in respect of the Indian states through a Crown representative. The two offices could be held by the Governor-General himself.\textsuperscript{83}

The Governor-General as representative of the king would exercise his authority over the Federation in association with a Council of Ministers. In certain specified cases, however he was to act his discretion and in certain others he was to exercise his individual judgement. In this discretion he would exercise all such functions as related to defence, ecclesiastical and external affairs, except relations with any part of the British empire.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{82} Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., p. 159.
\textsuperscript{83} Bankey Bihari Misra, op.cit., p. 86.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 87.
The Federal Legislature was to consist of the king represented by the Governor-General, and two chambers to be known respectively as the Council of State and the Federal Assembly. The Council of State was to consist of 156 representatives of British India and not more than 104 representatives of the Indian states. The Federal Assembly was to consist of 250 representatives of British India and not more than 125 representatives of the Indian states. The Council of State was to be a permanent body, one third of its members retiring every three years. The Assembly on the other hand was to have a maximum life of five years. The representatives of British India in the Council of State were to be directly elected, while those to the Federal Assembly were to be elected indirectly. The representatives of the Indian states were to be appointed by their respective rulers.85

Diarchy which had been abolished in the provinces had now been introduced in the centre. In the provinces the ministers responsible to the legislature were to have control over all provincial subjects except that the governor was to act ‘in his discretion’ and can exercise his individual judgment in matters related with maintaining peace and tranquility in the province, of safeguarding the legitimate interests of the minorities, protection of the rights of civil

85 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
servants and those of the states and their rulers and safeguarding
British commercial interests. The governor was also authorized (under
Section 93) to assume all powers of government in the event of a
breakdown of the constitutional machinery.86

The debate within the Congress began over fighting the
elections under the Act was like earlier debates, lucid and full of
weighty arguments. Yet with the civil disobedience being over and a
lull being visible in the political activity there was a strong pressure
from the senior leaders for office acceptance. Jawaharlal Nehru the
youth icon was strongly opposed to office acceptance as it would be
seen as Congress becoming a reformist type of an organization
harping the course it was on, during the pre 1919 years.

The British government was harping on the notion that once
the leaders were to taste the loaves and fishes of office they would
become less stringent on their nationalist programme and as the right
wing was the stronger group in the Congress it would in no way
give space to left leaning younger leaders of the party. Such fissures
and conflicts within the party will wreck Congress and its machinery
and its demands will tone down. Gandhi watching all these came
once again to the rescue and stressed that although satyagraha alone

86 S.M. Burke & Salim Al Din Qureishi, Quaid-E-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: His
was capable of winning freedom, he conciliated the proponents of council entry by acceding to their basic demand that they should be permitted to enter the legislatures. An argument was also put forwarded by him where he said that although Parliamentary politics could not lead to freedom but for those large number of Congressmen who could not for some reason or the other offer satyagraha or devote themselves to constructive work should not remain unoccupied.  

After much introspection the Congress decided to fight the elections in 1937 under the Act. Elections to the provincial legislative assemblies were held in February 1937 and Congress won absolute majority in five provinces (Madras, Bihar, Orissa, CP and UP) and a near majority in Bombay. Later it formed ministries in Assam and NWFP.

Of the principal Congress leaders only Rajagopalchari became Premier of his province, Madras; B.G. Kher became Premier of Bombay, N.R. Khare of CP, G.B. Pant of UP, S.K. Sinha of Bihar and Biswanath Das of Orissa. So as to ensure that these ministers functioned efficiently and did not deviate from the programme of the Congress, of not getting trapped in the imperial net, a ‘Parliamentary

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Sub-Committee consisting of three members of the Congress ‘High Command’ was formed in which Vallabhbhai Patel took charge of Bombay, Madras, CP and Sind, Rajendra Prasad of Bihar, Orissa and Assam and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad of UP, NWFP, Punjab and Bengal.\(^{88}\)

Its ministers were instructed to have no social contacts with governors or any officials. They were directed to remove all restrictions on ‘unlawful publications and organizations; and to effect the early release of any remaining political prisoners.\(^ {89}\)

Elections in Kanpur were very colourful and witnessed immense participation and voters turned out in large numbers. The main contenders in the election were Congress and Nawab Chattari’s National Agriculturist Party (NAP) which had tacit support of the British.\(^ {90}\) The Muslim League interestingly had a programme quite similar to that of the Congress. The Kanpur city had two seats covering the area of Kanpur municipality and cantonment and second of Juhi. One seat was reserved for a SC candidate. Jawaharlal

\(^{89}\) Ibid.,  
\(^{90}\) National Agriculturist Party was a loyalist landlord based party which had a strong official backing. Ganga Sahai Chaubey in his report on the Kanpur district election campaign alleged that the party workers and many zamindars forced the poor cultivators to vote for NAP. Brutal methods like beating, destroying of the houses and confiscating of cattle were resorted to by the landlords, *Vartman*, 12.2.1937.
Rohatgi defeated Guru Raghubir Dayal of the Communist Party in the municipality area and Dayal Das Chamar won in Juhi. There was also one Muslim constituency in Kanpur where Abdus Samad, a Congress supported Muslim League candidate won. In Kanpur rural constituency Vijayalakshmi Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru defeated Lady Kailash Srivastava by a huge margin.\textsuperscript{91}

Jawaharlal Nehru was the star campaigner of the elections in UP. He had arrived in Kanpur on 30 August 1936. A public meeting was held at Parade ground, presided over by city Congress committee chief Hariharnath Shastri. Nehru extolled the people to fight for their rights in the assembly with the help of the Congress and the performance of the party in these elections were to be a pointer in the direction of the goal that Congress wants to achieve.\textsuperscript{92}

Prospects of a Muslim League-Congress coalition seemed brighter in UP. Khaliquzzaman, a Muslim League leader had worked in unison with the Congress (he had served on the Congress Parliamentary Board as recently till 1936) in the selection of candidates for the provincial legislative elections. Interestingly the Congress had virtually conceded the Muslim League’s claim (that it represents the Muslims of India) even before the election and sought


\textsuperscript{92} Vartman, 1.9.1936.
to associate with it in an agreed plan of action. There were 66 Muslim constituencies in U.P. and Congress put up candidates only in 9 constituencies there by leaving the remaining 57 for the League. Of the League candidates, 27 were elected but not a single Congress Muslim could get through.\textsuperscript{93} With the elections now over there was a speculation in the League that Khaliquzzaman would be invited to form a coalition government with the Congress. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had came to Lucknow to oversee the formation of a ministry and believed that two Muslim League leaders Khaliquzzaman and Nawab Ismail Khan would be appointed ministers. However Nehru couldn’t agree to accommodate both and the Congress leaders went even further to told Muslim League that it could join the ministry but it should first cease to function as a separate group, all its members in the province should join and became members of the Congress and it must also dissolve its Parliamentary Board in the United Provinces.\textsuperscript{94}

Such proposals were to be naturally rejected by the League as it believed them to be tantamount to signing its death warrant and all hopes of making a rapprochement with the League were dashed. Jinnah now became more stiff and started an offensive that was to


\textsuperscript{94} S.M. Burke & Salim Al Din Qureishi, op.cit., p. 224.
culminate in the formation of Pakistan. Yet it can also be said that Muslim League’s performance in these elections was a little better than worst and it could not justify its claim to represent the Muslims of India. The Congress though had a spectacular success yet it could also not oversee the implications of its refusal to come to terms with the League and League’s performance was most successful in UP only.

Notwithstanding all these developments the Congress was in power in UP and it tried to give effect to its pre election promises. Immediately after his installation as Premier of UP, Pant summarily lifted restrictions on a number of publications and organizations and ordered for the release of non-political prisoners. Harry Haig the governor of UP resented this and tried to assert himself. Pant also realized the thin line that ran between them and came to a conclusion that it’s better to work in tandem. Haig and Pant shared good rapport with each other and when Pant agreed to furnish a statement denouncing violence Haig in his personal capacity and in a very difficult act to do as it was decided to release the prisoners convicted in the Kakori conspiracy case ten years before their term was to over. Yet to their much annoyance and of Gandhi too, the released convicts were honored and public celebrations took place in

95 Ibid.,
Kanpur and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{96} They were felicitated in city’s Parade ground and many ward committees presented them with mementos and people also arranged parties for them.\textsuperscript{97}

The Congress organization was kept going in the city due to handsome contributions it received from industrialists such as Padampat Singhania of JK Group and Ram Ratan Gupta of Laxmi Cotton Mills. In any case the party could not alienate its financial supporters to the extent of breaking point.

Immediately after the Congress assumed office in July 1937, a number of strikes took place in several cotton mills in the city with the workers demanding an increase in wages and a general improvement in their working conditions. There was a crackdown by the police on 6 August 1937 on striking workers. Pant denied that there was a lathi charge. He said in the assembly that, “The police did not open fire. One sub-inspector being, hard pressed by a mob numbering 5000, fired one shot resulting in an injury to one man.”\textsuperscript{98}

This defence of government actions against strikers is viewed within a larger discourse of ‘order’ and ‘stability’ and development of the province. As a popular government the Congress had to consider the demands of the workers. Yet the protection of industries was

\textsuperscript{96} D.A. Low, op.cit., p. 288.

\textsuperscript{97} Ramdev Morolia & Balkrishna Maheshwari, op.cit., p. 208.

\textsuperscript{98} Cf. Chitra Joshi, op.cit., pp. 293-294.
equally important to nationalist conceptions of development.99 A sympathetic hearing to the demands of the workers of Kanpur was very much on Congress’ anvil and leaders like Pant believed that the millowners should be more accommodating for they were in a position to give and workers were only in a position to take.100

The twenty seven months of Congress rule in UP was a rough-smooth affair hanging around sometimes good and bad governance. But it must be remembered that the constraints placed before the ministries were great and when the opportunity arose the leaders tried to emancipate the masses. At least the lifting of ban on various organizations and release of political prisoners plus reducing the burden of rent to historical low were to act as the pointers to what lay ahead if the country becomes independent.

99 Ibid., p. 294.
100 Ibid., 295. Chitra Joshi’s Lost Worlds is by far the most pioneer and outstanding work on Kanpur’s labour movement from the time it emerged as an industrial hub to the late 80s. She has touched on every major aspect and has thoroughly discussed the issues of communal solidarity, caste identity, labour’s view of the colonial state and factional politics within Kanpur’s labour class. Equally brilliant has been her analysis of labour’s relationship with the Congress and how it perceived the national movement. She says that in Kanpur, as in many other industrial centres, there was no apparent convergence between the rhythms of nationalist activity and working class activity. She further says that the relationship between workers and the state was marked by ambivalence. At certain moments there is an implicit faith in the impartiality of the colonial state, as opposed to the venality and injustice of employers while at other intervals for example during Plague Riots of 1900 or Kanpur Mosque incident of 1913 they expressed their ire against the state there by demonstrating the limits of their legitimacy.
War clouds were hovering in Europe and with the invasion of Poland by Germany on 1 September 1939, Second World War broke out. Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September. The viceroy Lord Linlithgow immediately declared India to be a party to the war. This high handed action without consulting the Congress naturally enraged the leaders and people.

By the time when Second World War had broken out Kanpur had emerged as the largest supply and manufacturing centre of north India. There was a general improvement in the status and conditions of mill owners, traders and even workers. Population of the city also got an increase. To see that no hartal or strike further takes place an increased allowance (bhatta) started being provided to the workers by mill owners. The workers were also provided essential items of their daily use at low rates.\(^{101}\)

At the All India Congress Committee meeting at Wardha on October 9-10, 1939 a resolution was passed in which the Congress declared its support to the people of Europe and stated that it is opposed to all imperialist wars and to the subjugation of one country by another. The resolution also criticized the government policy for declaring India a party to the war, without the consent of the Indian people and various draconian measures were hurriedly passed through

the legislatures and new ordinances promulgated to further cripple the already fragile powers vested in the Provincial Governments.\textsuperscript{102} Jata Shankar Shukla, an MLA, addressed a gathering of workers in Gwalatoli area where he appealed to them to work in tandem with people resisting the foreign rule.\textsuperscript{103}

The resolution already passed, the CWC in its next meeting at Wardha on 22 October 1939, the Congress’s Parliamentary Sub Committee now called upon all provincial ministers to tender their resignations. Some of them were reluctant in the beginning but pondering over the seriousness of the issue and that the viceroy had already rejected the demand of a ‘National Government’ to be set up during the war period they quickly followed.\textsuperscript{104}

The Kanpur District Congress Committee in a statement endorsed the decision of the central leadership and started preparing for the next round of struggle which was inevitable. Muralilal Rohatgi, Balkrishna Sharma and others organized meetings for the ministers who had relinquished office and asked them to urge the CWC to announce the launching of new resistance against the


\textsuperscript{103} Home Police Department. File No. 211/1939, UPSA.

\textsuperscript{104} D.A. Low, op.cit., p. 301.
colonial rule in its next meeting. The British government already apprehensive of Congress intentions enforced a Defence of India Ordinance restricting civil liberties on the very day the war was declared. In May 1940 it also passed Revolutionary Movement Ordinance aimed at crippling Congress by striking it at the first place. These ordinances made it easier for the government to arrest the Congressmen either voluntarily or by force.

The four years between the enactment of the Government Of India Act and the resignation of the Congress ministries in November 1939 were rich in lessons. True, independence was not yet achieved but India’s capacity for self governance through a parliamentary form of government had been brilliantly demonstrated although with limitations.

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105 Vartman, 7.11.1939.