THE LAST STAGE OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE
AND ROLE OF SWADESHI

In this chapter, we shall research the role of Swadeshi interalia in the Civil Disobedience movement launched by Gandhiji during the period from 1930-1947. Gandhiji touched the conscience of the people and stirred them to rise for Swadeshi, for nationalism and for pride.

Gandhiji began to talk of Salt, "There is no article like salt outside water by taxing which the state can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most in human poll tax the ingenuity of man can devise.

He informed the viceroy of his plan of action, as he believed every true Satyagrahi must.

Gandhiji along with a band of seventy-eight members of the Sabarmati Ashram, among whom were members belonging to every region and religion of India was to march from his headquarters in Ahmedabad through the villages of Gujarat for 240 miles. On reaching the coast of Dandi, he would break the salt laws by collecting salt from the beach.

Gandhiji explained his plans gave directions for future action impressed on the people the necessity for non-violence and prepared them for the government’s response.

Wherever possible, civil disobedience of Salt Laws should be started... liquor and foreign shops can be picketed we can refuse to pay
taxes, if we have the requisite strength. The lawyers can give up practice. The public can boycott the courts by refraining from litigation. Government servants can resign their posts... I prescribe only one condition that is let one pledge of truth and non-violence as the only means for the attainment of Swaraj is faithfully kept.

Explaining the power of civil disobedience, he said – "Supposing ten persons from each of the 700,000 Villages in India, came forward to manufacture Salt and to disobey the salt act, what do you thing this Government can do? Even the worst autocrat you can imagine would not dare to blow regiments of peaceful resisters."

In South Africa Gandhiji used the word Satyagraph and it was the case of a minority of people – the people of Indian origin in a far away country – trying to make themselves felt. The movement of 1920-21 was referred to as non-violent non-cooperation and the emphasis was on non-violence and on non-cooperation with evil. In 1930, it was not just non-cooperation but an action movement in favour of the redress of grievances.

Gandhiji said that non-cooperation and civil disobedience in the terms of Swaraj were not to be thought of without substantial constructive effort.

He explained to the workers briefly the place of the constructive programme in the struggle for freedom and its relation to Civil disobedience.

1. India’s struggle for independence by Bipin Chandra Pgs. 270-271
2. Gandhi’s concept of civil disobedience by Harpinder Kaur Pg.72
Civil disobedience had a place in the constructive programme, not merely as an economic activity but as a means for the attainment of Swaraj.

Civil disobedience was of two types, individual and the mass. Individual civil disobedience was everybody's inherent right, like the right of self-defence, in normal life. No special sanction was needed for the practice of this kind of civil disobedience. Just as a man in normal life would use his dagger, revolver or fisticuffs to stay off or sudden attack, even so, civil disobedience would be resorted to by the constructive worker as a non-violence equivalent to the use of fisticuffs or arms. This does not require the sanction or permission from anybody.

As an illustration of how this civil disobedience could be used to overcome the government's opposition to constructive work, he took up the hypothetical cause of a worker engaged in the service of the Adivasis. If the government prevented him from going among them, he would simply disobey the order. The government might put him in prison. He would welcome it. The very fact that he had gone to prison in order to serve the Adivasis would enshrine him in their hearts.

Mass civil disobedience was for the attainment of independence. For it was the fulfilment of the constructive programme almost in its entirety. 3

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3. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol VII Pgs. 33-34
PREPARATION FOR A MOVEMENT

Gandhiji concentrated on educating the masses through intensive training preaching against religions intolerance and untouchability and almost obsessive remedy of the country's economic ills through Khadi programmes. The period of 1927-28 was devoted to contract for mass reform. 4

No Khadi worker can afford to be indifferent to other things with which Khadi is interrelated or lose sight of its co-relation to the struggle for independence. Experience has shown that wherever intensive charkha work had been done the people had shown greater grit, unity and capacity for organisations in the struggle for independence. 5

Gandhi reiterated that Swaraj could be achieved only through constructive programme. 6

BASIC APPROACH OF THE MOVEMENT

Gandhiji said, "If we wish to achieve Swaraj through truth and non-violence gradual but steady building up from the bottom upwards by constructive effort is the only way." 7

"Non-violence is a mighty weapon. In action it takes the form of civil disobedience, non-violent and non-cooperation. Civil disobedience is a very potent weapon. But every one cannot wield it. For that one needs

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4. Gandhi's concept of civil disobedience by Harpinder Kaur Pgs.73-74
5. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol VII Pg. 35
6. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol VII Pg. 42
7. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol VI Pg. 38-39
training and inner strength. We must learn resolutely to say 'no' when it becomes a duty. The hunt for wealth and fame is not for the non-cooperator. Let us be patient and go through all the suffering that may be in store for us.  

Gandhiji had written - "The political emancipation means a rise of mass – consciousness. It cannot come without affecting all the branches of national activity."

For this lowest strata of society of the masses Gandhi had two programmes – the spinning wheel and removal of untouchability. Though Khadi had figured quite prominently in the non-cooperation programme in this political lull of Gandhi, it was turned into a cult.

While the spinning wheel had an economic significance for the farmers, the labourer or the helpless widow in the villages, to the townsman its appeal was based on moral and spiritual grounds. India's town had flourished at the expense of villages but now they had a chance to make amends for their past sins by buying cloth spun and woven in village homes and thus to forge a link, economic as well as sentimental between town and village. In his efforts to sell spinning wheel to the people, he put it forward, not only as a solution to economic ills but also for national unity and freedom."

9. Gandhi's concept of civil disobedience by Harpinder Kaur Pgs. 75-76.
Gandhiji said, “We believe that it is an inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and to have the necessaries of life. We believe that any government that deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses and has ruined India, economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe that India must sever the British connection and attain “Purna Swaraj”, or complete independence.

India has been ruined economically, of the heavy taxes we pay, twenty per cent are raised from the land revenue derived from the peasantry and three per cent from the salt tax which falls most heavily on the poor.

“Village industries have been destroyed, such as hand spinning, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in a year and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts.

The British manufactured good constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration.

Politically, India’s status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people.
The rights of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to us and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad. All administrative talent is killed and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and club ship."

"Culturally the system of education has won us from our moorings, our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us."

"Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army too has crushed in us the spirit of resistance.

"We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. We recognise however that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will prepare ourselves by withdrawing all voluntary association from the British government and will prepare for civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can withdraw our voluntary help, stop payment of taxes without doing violence, even under provocation the end of this inhuman rule is assured."

The remedy to get rid of British Government is to non-cooperate with system by withdrawing all the voluntary assistance possible and refusing all its so-called benefits. A little reflection will show that civil disobedience is a necessary part of non-cooperation. You assist an administration most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil administration never deserves such allegiance. A good man will therefore

10. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol III Pg. 8-9
resist an evil system or administration with his whole soul. Disobedience of the laws of an evil state is therefore a duty”.

Gandhiji had said, “When a government become lawless in an organised manner, civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty and is the only remedy open”, Gandhiji had said, “Civil disobedience is civil breach of immoral statutory enactments”.

Civil disobedience is the last stage, the most dramatic form of non-cooperation. Non-cooperation is a less fierce kind of a branch of statyagraha than civil disobedience. Whereas non-cooperation can be safely practised by the masses, civil disobedience can be practised only as a last resort and by a select few at any rate in the beginning. Civil disobedience is more difficulty than non-cooperation because it presupposes the habit of willing obedience of laws without fear of their sanctions.

“Civil disobedience is really a synthesis of civility and disobedience i.e. non-violence and resistance. Resistance to bad laws in essential for man’s growth, while civility is the demand of a stable social order without which man’s life and growth are not possible”.

Disobedience is in itself destruction and anti-social but obedience to an immoral law is even worse and can never be a duty... Disobedience to immoral laws of the state is really obedience to a higher moral law, the law of truth and justice. Civil disobedience is thus an effort to reconcile the demands of freedom and law.

Gandhiji regarded civil disobedience a necessary part of non-cooperation.

Non-cooperation was conceived in a much wider context as an instrument of social action... In 1921 his emphasis was on ‘tapas’ in civil disobedience and on ‘ahinsa’ in non-cooperation although both concepts contained the elements of self-suffering and non-violence.¹²

ESSENCE OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

Gandhiji said, “I can see the time coming, when I must refuse obedience to every single state made law, even through there may be a certainty of bloodshed. When neglect of the call means denial of God, Civil disobedience becomes a duty. Mass civil disobedience can be tried in a calm atmosphere.”

“We must treat arrest as the normal condition of life of a non-co-operator. For we must seek arrest and imprisonment, as a soldier, who goes to battle seeks death.

Civil disobedience means our desire to surrender to a single unarmed policeman.

Our triumph consists in being imprisoned for no wrong whatsoever. The greater our innocence, the greater our strength and the swifter our victory.

¹². Gandhi’s concept of civil disobedience by Harpinder Kaur Pgs. 78,79,80.
We have too long been mentally disobedient to the laws of the state and have too often surreptitiously evaded them to be fit all of a sudden for civil disobedience. Disobedience to be civil has to be open and non-violent.”

“Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion - a refusal to obey every single state made law. It is certainly more dangerous than an armed rebellion. For it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardships.

“It is my firm conviction that if we bring a successful boycott of foreign cloth, we shall have produced an atmosphere that would enable us to inaugurate civil disobedience on a scale that no government can resist. I would therefore urge patience and determined concentration on Swadeshi upon those who are impatient to embark on mass civil disobedience.”

Addressing a meeting on the Chowpati Sands on Aug.1, after consigning foreign clothes to flames, Gandhiji said, “untouchability of foreign cloth is as much a virtue with us as untouchability of the suppressed classes most be a Sin with every devout Hindu.”

“There is no deliverance for India without true Swadeshi.”

“Our purified reasons must show us the true economics of Swadeshi. Our purified hearts must make us strong to withstand the temptation of yielding to the charms of foreign cloth. However good it may be outside India, it is not good enough for India”.

Khadi is on a fair way to become a state dress. During the transition period, the coarse and unwashed Khadi is the best.
I swear by Swadeshi. It can succeed only if India acts as one mind and if India can do so in Swadeshi, she will have learnt the secret of Swaraj.”

“Mass civil disobedience is like an earthquake. Where the reign of a mass civil disobedience begins, there the subsisting government ceases to function.

Every policeman, every soldier, every government official must either leave the place or enlist in the service of Swaraj. The disobedience should be so complete that if an order was issued on us by the government saying ‘Go to the right’, we must not hesitate to more leftward.

The essence of civil disobedience is that it must be undertaken in a spirit of perfect composure. If disobedience were taken in a spirit of angry excitement, then disobedience instead of being civil would become criminal.

Every state puts down criminal disobedience by force. But to put down civil disobedience is to attempt to imprison conscience. Civil disobedience can lead to strength and purity.

Civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the step has become lawless and a citizen that barters with such a state, shares its corruption of lawlessness.

Civil disobedience is a preparation for mute suffering. Its effect is marvellous though gentle.¹³

¹³. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol II Pgs. 52-54,66,76,84.
SALT SATYAGRAHA

The eleven points published at the end of 1930 according to Gandhi were - total prohibition, reduction of the exchange rate, 50% reduction of land revenue, abolition of the salt tax, reduction of military expenditure at least by 50% to begin with, reduction of civil service salaries of the highest grade by half, protective tariff on foreign cloth, enactment of coastal tariff reservation bill, discharge of all political prisoners, save those condemned for murder, abolition or control of the criminal investigation department, issue of licenses for fire arms for self defence.

The British government had complete monopoly on salt in India. It made the salt and it sold, and to the sale price it added a stiff tax. It even went so far as to destroy salt where it occurred naturally along the sea, so that poor people could not use it. The British government netted itself nearly 20 million dollars a year from its salt monopoly in India.

Gandhi’s symbolic choice of salt was to bring home the point that salt was a sign of oppression of the Indians by the alien government.

Gandhiji had said that salt Satyagraha should appeal to all the communities in India since “resistance to the salt tax can hurt no single communal interest”. Consequently in spite of all the communal forces at work many Muslims participated in the campaign.

It was decided that Gandhiji himself would break the law. It was to be the first move in a civil disobedience campaign that was to include non-payment of taxes, withdrawal from government schools courts and
Suddenly salt tax became a subject to discussion in young India. Gandhiji wrote on Feb. 27 in young India—"It must be taken for granted that when civil disobedience is started many arrest is a certainty. This time after my arrest there is to be no mute passive non-violence but non-violence of the active type, so that not a single believer in the non-violence as an article of faith of the purpose of achieving in India’s goal should find himself free or alive at the end of the effort to submitting longer to the existing slavery, therefore it would be the duty of every one to take up such civil disobedience as may be advised by my successor or might be taken up by the congress."15

Mr. Gandhi and his followers reached the sea by Dandi on 5th April 1930. On 6th April he and his followers broke the salt laws exactly at 6.30 P.M. Immediately after braking salt laws Mr. Gandhi issued the statements that everyone who would take the risk of prosecution under the salt laws could manufacture salt where he wished and when ever it was convenient to him. And thus started the salt Stayagraha, which was popularly known as civil disobedience movement.

After the arrest of Mr. Gandhi on 5th May 1930, congress working committee at its meeting at Allahabad resolved to stiffen the movement further by passing various resolutions students, lawyers and others professional men, workers, peasants, merchants, industrialists and government servants were called upon to contribute to the success of the “fight for freedom”.16

14. Gandhi’s concept of civil disobedience by Harpinder Kaur Pgs. 48, 49
16. Civil disobedience movement in Punjab by D.R. Grover Pg 55-57
Gandhiji said, “If we wish to achieve Swaraj through truth and non-violence, gradual but steady building up from the bottom upwards by constructive efforts is the only way.”

The editorial entitled – “Peace organisation” dated 18th Jan. was written by Gandhiji.

Fortunately for India and humanity, the congress has pledged itself since 1920 to win India’s freedom through non-violent means. It has been offering civil disobedience at intervals and all the time playing with its vital programme of construction. At one time every congressman was expected to create something for the nation. He or she was to spin for the nation. There were other items too. The moment has now come for him to make a definite choice. The only programme before him is to become a servant or soldier of peace. A soldier of peace has to give all his spare time to the promotion of peace.17

On 30th July, 1st August, the congress working committee met at Bombay to decide programme of the congress. It directed all congress organisations to take steps to carry out as far as possible the following programme in the coming months –

a) Boycott of foreign cloth.
b) Boycott of liquor and other intoxicants.
c) Boycott of central and provincial legislatures.
d) Boycott of British goods.
e) Withdrawal of deposits in post office savings bank accounts and post cash certificates.

f) Boycott of government loans.
g) Boycott of government officials.
h) Disobedience of various repressive ordinances.
i) Preparation for and inauguration and continuance of a campaign for non-payment of land revenues or such other government tax as the provincial organisation might consider necessary and feasible.
j) Setting up in cooperation with the mercantile community arbitration boards for the purpose of dealing with the business disputes.
k) Calling upon students of colleges to take full share in the national struggle, even by suspending studies.
l) Withdrawal of support to British Insurance, banking and shipping concerns.
m) Vigorous propaganda for the use of truly Swadeshi articles and support to truly Swadehsi concerns even at a sacrifice.18

This new form of salt Satyagraha was eagerly adopted by the people, who soon made it a mass affair. At Wadala a suburb of Bombay, the raids on the salt works culminated on 1st June in mass action by a crowd of 15,000 who repeatedly broke the police cordon and triumphantly carried away salt in the face of charges by the mounted police.

In Karnataka, 10,000 invaded the Sanikatta salt works and faced lathis and bullets.

In Madras, the defiance of salt laws led to repeated clashes with the police.

In Andhra, a band of village women walked mills to carry away a handful of salt and in Bengal, the old Gandhian ashrams regenerated by the flood of volunteers from the towns continued to sustain a powerful salt Satyagraha in Midnapore and other coastal pockets.

The districts of Balasore, Puri and Cuttack in Orissa remained active centres of illegal salt manufacture.

But salt Satyagraha was only the catalyst and the beginning, for a rich variety of forms of defiance that it brought in its wake.

Gandhiji asked for vigorous boycott of foreign cloth and liquor shops.

Women students and youth played the most prominent part in the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor. Many mill owners refused to use foreign yarn and pledged not to manufacture coarse cloth that competed with Khadi.

The liquor boycott brought government revenues from excise duties crashing down.¹⁹

Once the civil disobedience to the salt laws was inaugurated at Amritsar on 13th April 1930. The Satyagraha committee gave permission to all District Committees to start salt Satyagraha in the province. At some

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¹⁹. India’s struggle for Independence by Bipin Chandra Pg. 275-276.
of the places salt was prepared daily. Every stage of the process of manufacture of salt out of saline earth was explained by congress volunteers to the public.

Besides the preparation of the contraband salt in urban areas attempts to spread the practice in the villages were intensified by means of Jathas and individual speakers. 20

**BOYCOTT OF FOREIGN CLOTH**

Intensive campaign for boycott of foreign cloth was started in the Punjab and other parts of the country. Big merchants as well as petty shopkeepers who had been dealing exclusively in foreign cloth read and without much persuasion signed the pledge not to import any foreign cloth.

The movement instead of remaining confined only to foreign cloth extended to some other foreign goods like drugs and medicines.

In Hoshiarpur, Swadeshi Pracharak Sabha was formed and it held Swadeshi Bazars and exhibitions in the town in which dealers of all sorts of Swadeshi cloth were invited to participate.

The object was to encourage indigenous handicrafts and to bring about an effective boycott of foreign cloth and goods. 21

Gandhi said, - “If destruction of foreign cloth be a sound proposition for the highest moral standpoint, the possibility of a rise in the

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20. Civil disobedience movement in Punjab by D.R. Grover Pgs. 63-65
price of Swadeshi cloth need not frighten us. Destruction is the quickest method of stimulating production by one supreme effort and swift destruction. India has to be awakened from her torpor and enforced idleness...foreign cloth to India is like foreign matter to the body. Destruction of the former is as necessary for the health of India as of the latter, for the health of the body.”

“We need not be afraid of evolving the fullest Swadeshi spirit. Let India become alive by self-purification i.e. self-restrain and self-denial. 22

**SWADESHI**

Gandhiji had said, — “The workers should definitely realise that the constructive programme is the non-violence and truthful way of winning Swaraj or complete independence. Its wholesale fulfilment is Purna Swaraj. Imagine all forty crore people engaged in the whole of constructive programme which is designed to build up the nation from the very bottom upward.”

“Civil disobedience mass or individual is an aid to constructive efforts and is a full substitute for armed revolt. Just as military training is necessary for an armed revolt training in constructive effort is equally necessary for civil resistance.”

The pioneers have had to go through the fire of suffering through out the world. There is no Swaraj without suffering. In violence truth is the greatest sufferer. In non-violence truth is ever triumphant. 23

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22. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol II Pg. 55,56.
Side by side with the boycott and picketing, efforts were also made to popularise Swadeshi in the Punjab. The Punjab Swadeshi Pracharak Sangh was formed at Lahore in July 1930. It was decided that the work of the sangh would be directed through the following channels.

a) In information bureau to supply and receive information about the various products manufactured in India by Indian concerns,

b) To carry on door-to-door propaganda and takes pledges from at least ten lakhs of people to use Swadeshi,

c) To open a show room where samples of Swadeshi goods would be exhibited for the information and education of the public,

d) To encourage, help and start the opening of Swadeshi stores in the provinces of Punjab and Delhi,

e) To distribute pamphlets, directories and other propaganda literature.

The object of the Sabha was to encourage indigenous handicrafts and to bring about an effective boycott of foreign goods.

Swadeshi bazaars were organised on a big scale at Lahore. The idea behind the Swadeshi Bazar was to give wide publicity to the Indian products and to bring together the Swadeshi manufacturers and the customers.
Besides the hand woven and hand spun cloth all articles of daily use i.e. fancy goods toys, shoes and boots and boot polishes, hosiery embroidery, clay and plaster wares, glass wares, machinery, sugar, ghee, utensils, medicines, sports furniture, cutlery, locks, stationery, fountain pens, pencils and toilet requisites like oils, soaps, scents, tooth pastes, free cream, combs, brushes etc. were all exhibited in the bazaar. 24

**NO TAX CAMPAIGN AND RURAL AGITATION**

Propaganda in rural areas for non-payment of land revenue was also started. The movement to spread sedition in the villages was intensified by means of small wandering bands and individual speakers.

In Lahore and Amritsar and Lyallpur districts where the rural agitation had been more intensive and better organised than elsewhere and where the population was more responsive to the political agitation the agitators were able to create a better impression than elsewhere. 25

Eastern India became the scene of a new kind of no-tax campaign refusal to pay chowkidara tax.

Chowkidars were guards who supplemented the small police force in the rural areas in this region. They were particularly hated because they acted as spies for the government and often as retainers for the local landlords.

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The movement against this tax and calling for the resignation of chowkidara first started in Bihar in May itself, as salt agitation had not much of scope due to the land locked nature of the province. In the Monghys, Sasan and Bhagalpur districts for example the tax was refused. Chowkidars were induced to resign and social boycott used against those who resisted. The government retaliated by confiscation of property worth hundreds and thousands in lien of a few rupees of tax and by beating and torture. As elsewhere, repression further increased the nationalists' strength and the police just could not enter the rural areas.

In Bengal, the onset of the monsoon, which made it difficult to make salt, brought about a shift to ant-chowkidara agitation. Here too, villagers with stood severe repression losing thousands of rupees worth of property through confiscation and destruction and having to hide for days in forests to escape the wrath of the police.

In Gujarat, in Kheda district in Bardoli taluqa in Surat district and Jambusar in broach a determined no tax movement was in progress the tax refused here was land revenue. Villages in their thousands, with family cattle and household goods crossed the border from British India into the neighbouring princely states such as Baroda and camped for months together in the open fields.

Their houses were broken into, their belongings destroyed, their lands confiscated.

Defiance of forest laws assumed a mass character in Maharashtra, Karnataka and the central provinces especially in areas with large tribal populations who had been the most seriously affected by the Colonial governments' restrictions on the use of forest.
In Assam, a powerful agitation led by students was launched against the infamous Cunnigham circular, which forced students and their guardians to furnish assurances of good behaviours.

U.P. was the setting of another kind of movement – no revenue, no rent campaign. The no revenue part was a call to the Zamindars to refuse to pay revenue to the government, the no rent a call to the tenants not to pay rent to the zamindars. In effect, since the zamindars were largely loyal to the government, this became a no rent struggle. Jawaharlal Nehru got the U.P. Congress Committee to sanction the no-rent campaign. Two months of preparation and intensive propaganda led to the launching of the campaign in December. By January, severe repression had forced many peasants to flee the villages. Among the important centres of this campaign were the Districts of Agra and Rae Bareli. 26

THE EFFECTS

The civil disobedience campaign has not only been continuous, but it has also been widespread. There is no form which had not been tried here. Intensive subversive, excitation by meetings speeches and processions, pamphleteering, enrolment of volunteers, breaches of salt laws, breaches of forest laws, refusal to pay rent, refusal to pay municipal taxes, refusal to pay land revenue picketing of cloth, liquor and other shops boycott and molestation of government servants and the supporters of government efforts to subvert military and police from their loyalty, attempts to close schools and colleges, resistance to arrests, disobedience to prohibiting orders. 27

27. Civil disobedience movement in Punjab by D.R. Grover Pg. 100.
INDIVIDUAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

On Oct. 17, 1940 Vinoba Bhave inaugurated the individual Satyagraha movement by delivering an anti war speech of Paunar, a village near Wardha. He moved from village to village on foot and made speeches on three following days. On 21st Oct. he was arrested.

The Government had given strict instructions to the press not to give any publicity to Vinoba's speeches and had thus in effect put a ban on reporting of the anti war activities. On Oct. 18 the editor of Harijan and the allied weeklies received a notice advising him that no account of incidents leading up to Satyagraha by Vinoba Bhave and no report of his speeches or any subsequent development" be published without previous reference to the Chief Press adviser Delhi.

Gandhiji said that, "Every act of civil disobedience is complete in itself."

"This press notice shows how effective it has been. Every act of repression adds strength to reality Satyagraha thrives on repression till last repressor is tried of it and the object of Satyagraha is gained".

"Gandhiji said, let everyone become his own walking newspaper and carry the good news from mouth to mouth. The idea is of telling my neighbour what I have authentically heard. This no government can overtake or suppress. It is the cheapest newspaper and it defies the wit of the government. They should make sure of the source of information and will find that the public gets all the information that they need without opening the morning newspaper."
Jawaharlal Nehru had been chosen to follow Vinoba Bhave on Nov. 7, after giving due notice to the authorities. But he was arrested on Oct. 31.

In Mid-Nov. the second stage of the campaign began with what Gandhi called representative Satyagraha. Satyagrahis were selected from groups such as the congress working committee, the A.I.C.C., the Congress members of the central and the provincial legislatures. One by one all the top leaders were arrested.

Gandhiji said, “The idea is ultimately for every congressman to act on his own and be his own president but nobody else’s. That is the conception of a completely non-violent institution or society. Not much direction is required by those who have learnt the art of suffering.

Gandhiji said, “In many places magistrates have been imposing heavy fines on civil resisters in some cases without option of imprisonment. The civil resister must not and cannot complain of whatever penalty is imposed on them”.

Gandhiji said, “As a matter of fact, it is the essence of civil disobedience that the resister becomes indifferent, whether the authorities take away all his property or not. Therefore all the propertied persons who wish to join the struggle should do so well knowing that the whole of their property may be take up by the government. This is a struggle which has no ending except in success.”

On 5th January 1941, the third stage opened. List of Satyagrahis had been prepared by local congress committees and several persons named therein and certified by Gandhi to do what was expected of them.
Hundreds of Satyagrahis swelled the Chorus: "It is wrong to help the British war effort with men and money. The only worthy effort is to resist all was with non-violent resistance." And by the end of January the number of convictions had risen to about 2,250. In several cases fines were imposed instead of imprisonment. Both the extent of the movement and the manner it was dealt with varied from province to province. It was strongest in the united provinces and about half the total arrests was made there. Northwest frontier province was the least affected.

Gandhiji said "In view of the fact that the individual civil disobedience has already commenced and a large number of congressmen have already been imprisoned all over India it becomes a special duty of every Indian to concentrate with redoubled zeal on the constructive programme without the fulfilment of which no civil disobedience, mass or individual can help us to win and retain Swaraj."

The fourth stage of the campaign began in April. The rank and file members of the congress were enrolled. The result was a sharp rise in the number of Satygrahis. By mid summer once 20,000 had been convicted as many as 14,000 being in Jail at one time. 28

Civil disobedience is the assertion of a right, which law should give but it, denies.

Gandhiji denied that Satyagraha was a policy of passive inaction. He asked the congressmen to press on with the constructive programme with which civil disobedience had been coupled form the outset.

Civil disobedience was taken up, in order to make good and vindicate the claim of the congress to let the British and the world know that there is at the very least a large body of public opinion represented by the congress, which is utterly opposed to the participation. It was not because it wishes any disaster to the British arms or victory to the Nazis but because it sees no deliverance either for the victors or for the languished and certainly no deliverance for India out of this war.

Civil disobedience without the backing of the constructive programme can never lead us to independence. Civil disobedience even when it is mass, will only be offered by those who are fit, whereas constructive programme is for all and will never be suspended if the whole nation took it up in earnest. It is enough to give us complete independence.

"To my mind, Swaraj based on Non-violence is the fulfilment of the constructive programme, hence whether the authorities jail us or not, we must pursue the constructive programme." 29

CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME – 1941

In mid December 1941, Gandhiji issued a 25-page booklet constructive programme, it meaning and place for the achievement of “non-violent independence”.

Gandhiji had said for my handling of Civil disobedience without the constructive programme will be like a paralysed hand attempting to lift a spoon.

29. Mahatma by D.B. Tendulkar Vol VI Pgs. 10-11, 12, 13, 14, 16.
Constructive programme may more fittingly be called construction of Purna Swaraj by truthful and non-violent means.

The thirteen items of the constructive programme are as follows:-

i) COMMUNAL UNITY:
It means an unbreakable heart unity. Every congressman has to feel his identity with every one of the millions of the inhabitants of Hindustan. In order to realise this, every congressmen will cultivate personal friendship with persons representing faiths other than his own.

(ii) REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY:
It is necessary to remove this blot and curse upon Hinduism. Gandhiji said that Hindu congressmen should take up the cause and influence the so-called santanists. They should approach them not in a militant spirit but in spirit of friendliness. Hindus should make a common cause with the Harijans and be friend them in their lawful isolation — such isolation was the world has never seen. But it is part of the task of building the edifice of Swaraj.

(iii) PROHIBITION:
Like communal unity and removal of untouchability, it has been on the Congress programme since 1920.

Medical men can make a most effective contribution towards the removal of this evil. They have to discover ways of weaning the drug and opium addict from the case.
(iv) KHADI:
Gandhiji says that Khadi connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country. Khadi means wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessaries of life in Indian and that two through the labour and intellect of the villages. Instead of half a dozen cities in India and Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties.

Production of Khadi includes cotton-growing, picking, ginning, cleaning carding, silvering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing the warp and the wood, weaving and washing. These are essential processes.

(v) OTHER VILLAGE INDUSTRIES:
They cannot exist without Khadi and Khadi will be robbed of its dignity without them. Village economic cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand grinding, papermaking, match making, tanning, oil pressing etc. All should make it a point of honour to use only the village articles. Wherever and wherever available. When we have become village minded, we will not want imitation of the west or machine made products, but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of new India, in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown.

(vi) VILLAGE SANITATION:
The approach to many villages is not a refreshing experience. If the majority of congressmen are desired from our villages, as they should be they should able to make our village models of cleanliness in every sense of the word.
(vii) NEW OR BASIC EDUCATION:
This education is meant to transform the village children into model villages. It is principally designed for them. Congressmen who want to build up the structure of Swaraj from its very foundation dare not neglect the children. The primary education under the British is a farce designed without regard to the wants of the India, of the villages or even cities. Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages to all that is best. It develops the body, the mind and also keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future.

(viii) ADULT EDUCATION:
If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country. The villagers' India is contained in his village. The villagers know nothing of the foreign rule and its evils, they do not know how to get rid of it. They do not know that the foreigner's presence is due to their own weaknesses and their ignorance of the power they possess to rid themselves of the foreign rule. My adult education therefore means first true political education of the adult by word of mouth.

(ix) UPLIFT OF WOMEN:
In a plan of life based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny, as man has to shape his. It is the privilege of congressmen to give the women of India a lifting hand. Women are in a position somewhat of themselves of old, who did not know that he could or ever had to be free.

It is upto the congressmen to see that they enable the women to realise their full status and play their part as equals of men.
(x) EDUCATION IN HEALTH AND HYGIENE:

It is established beyond doubt that ignorance and neglect of the laws of health and hygiene are responsible for the majority of diseases.

The fundamental laws of health and of hygiene are simple. They are purest thoughts and banish all idle and impure thoughts.

Breathe the freshest air day and night. Establish a balance between body and mental work.

Be neat and clean in every one of your acts.

Eat to live for service of fellowmen. Hence your food must be enough to keep your mind and body in good order. Your water, food and air must be clean.

(xi) PROPAGANDA OF RASHTABHASHA:

The languages of India have suffered impoverishment. The result has been disastrous. The masses remains cut off from the modern mind.

The masses can make no sold contribution to the construction of Swaraj. It is inherent in Swaraj based on non-violence that every individual makes his own direct contribution to the independence movement.

This is impossible, unless every step is explained in their own languages.
The Congress is its famous resolution passed at the Cawnpore session in 1925 called this all India Speech Hindustani and since then in theory Hindustani has been the Rashtrabhasha.

(xii) LOVE OF ONES OWN LANGUAGE:
The above and these two propositions hand together for those who view India as one country.

(xiii) WORKING FOR ECONOMIC EQUALITY:
Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between the capital and labour.

It means the levelling down of a few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation’s wealth and on the other hand levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other.

If ever we are to achieve equality, the foundation has to be laid now. It will not drop from heaven all of a sudden, but it has to be built up brick by brick by cooperate self-effort.

Gandhiji says, “I have attempted to show how each item fits in with the scheme of Swaraj and how it can be worked by individual congressmen. The programme snot exhaustive. Swaraj is a mighty structure. Eighty crore hands have to work at building it.”

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PEASANT MOVEMENTS

The peasant movements of 1920-1922 and 1930-1932 in Oudh, a region consisting of twelve districts in the United Provinces (hereafter U.P.) had distinctive aspects. Since they constitute a major landmark in the development of the peasant movement in India.

The movement of the 1920's synchronised with the non-cooperation movement and that of the 1930's emerged from the civil disobedience movement they represented much more than tenant–landlord grievances, although such grievances unquestionably contributed to them.

At first the British considered them a reactionary and oppressive class and hence their land settlement policy was aimed at weakening the talukdars. However, large-scale participation by Oudh Talukdars in the Indian Mutiny (1857) had convinced the British that they wielded considerable power and following. The government regarded them as natural leaders of the people. Political expediency following the Mutiny required pacification and protection of the talukdars' interest by conferring on them the right of full proprietorship in land and powers to evict their old tenants and to admit new oijes. In return the talukdars extended their loyalty and support to the raj.

Various enactments and sub-settlements attempted between, 1860 and 1900 let the talukdars' growing economic dominance unfettered. They did not prevent evictions, enhancements of rents, demanding nazranas, extortion of illegal cesses (taxes) called 'abwabs' and begar (forced labour).
In the post-Mutiny era the British were naturally anxious to prevent agrarian discontent and passed some progressive agrarian legislation. The U.P. legislative council had passed the tenancy act of 1901 enabling a tenant to acquire occupancy right if he held the same land continuously for a period of twelve years. Nearly 90% of the tenants in the Agra province benefited from this measure. The act however did not apply to the districts in Oudh where the tenancy continued to feel as insecure as before. 1

CONGRESS AND THE AGRARIAN AGITATION 1920-1922

In U.P. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya organised a Kisan Sabha in Allahabad district to Champion the peasants' cause. Although its aim was to advocate the political interests of a peasantry as a whole, its actual appeal was limited to high caste Brahmin and Rajput tenants and small zamindars.

There were two district strata of peasantry in the 1920-1922 agitation. At one level a section of the tenantry was protesting against the landlords' exaction and was trying to secure occupancy rights by pressing the government into suitable reforms.

At the other level the peasants' resistance was more fervent – they openly attached landlords' property and plundered markets.

The tenants who had neither security of tenure nor a sufficient holding for subsistence food were anxious over immediate problems. It was these peasants who were the main force in the agrarian movements of

1920-1922, in which sporadic rioting, plunder and attack on landlords was the key features.

**CONGRESS AND THE NO RENT CAMPAIGN 1930-1932**

Although the U.P. movement alarmed by the outbreaks of 1921 amended the Oudh Rent act so as to give greater security to tenants and some protection against illegal exactions (by making Nazrana illegal) the agrarian structure and class resolutions in Oudh remained in functional terms unaltered during the 1920’s.

Gandhiji’s call for ‘Constructive work’ in the rural areas sent some workers into the villages, thus making at least a start on formation of the village level network which the congress had lacked earlier.

The slump in the prices that came with the depression of 1929-34 found congressmen in the U.P. more ready and more able to exploit agrarian discontent.

Initially absentee landlords and non-cultivating owners substantial holdings were not seriously affected but later. When tenants were unable to pay their rents and substitute tenants could only offer half of the previous rent demand, they felt the pressure of the slump. Poor peasants at least initially stood to gain since they could supplement their income from labouring and wages. It was in fact the rich and middle peasants whom the depression hit the hardest.

It was this situation of deepening economic crisis, which the congress in U.P. sought to exploit for its own political ends.
The no-rent campaign began in Oudh in early 1930, it was a prelude to the nation wide civil disobedience movement. The campaign first started in the Rae Bareli district succeeded in rousing the tenancy to withhold rents. Jawaharlal Nehru addressed a series of peasant meetings in Rae Bareli district to advice tenants not to pay enhanced rents to their landlords. The U.P. provincial congress committee endorsed Nehru's action advised both the zamindars and their tenants to withhold payments of revenue and enhanced rents respectively.

Initially congress appealed to both these classes but the zamindars paid their revenue dues to government whereas the tenancy did not pay rents.

In practice therefore, the no tax campaign boiled down to a no rent campaign.

The landlords mobilised their forces to coerce tenants and there were some isolated cases of tenants attacking landlords. The peasant violence formed a very small component of the agrarian agitation. When the government started repression there was no resistance whosoever from either the peasants or from congress, agitation. They maintained a genuinely non-violent agrarian movement within civil disobedience.  

Peasants in Gujarat especially in Surat and Kheda refused to pay their taxes and went on Hijrat to neighbouring Baroda territory to escape government repression. Their lands and moveable property was confiscated.

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2. Peasant movements in India 1920-1950 by D.N. Dhanagare Pgs. 116-123.
In Bihar and Bengal powerful movement were launched against the hated chowkidari tax, which the villagers were made to pay for the upkeep of their own oppressors.

In Punjab no revenue campaign was accompanied by the emergence of the Kisan Sabhas that demanded a reduction in land revenue and water rates and scaling down of debts.

Forest Satyagrahas by which peasants including tribal, defied the forest laws that prohibited them from use of the forest were popular in Maharashtra, Bihar and Central provinces.

Anti Zamindari struggles emerged in Andhra and the first target was the Venkatagiri Zamindari in Nellore district.

Civil disobedience movement was increasingly brought under the influence of the left ideology that was being propagated by Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, the communist and other Marxists and left individuals.

In 1934 with the formation of the congress socialist party (CSP) the process of the consolidation of the left forces received a significant push forward.

The communists got the opportunity by becoming members of the CSP to work in a legal fashion.

This consolidation of the left acted as a spur to the formation of an all India body to coordinate the Kisan movement, a process that was
already under way through the efforts of N.G. Ranga and other Kisan leaders.

The culmination was the establishment of the All India Kisan Congress in Lucknow in April 1936.

Kisan manifesto considerably influenced the agrarian programme adopted by the congress, which included demands fifty per cent reduction in land revenue and rent, a moratorium on debts, the abolition of feudal levies. Security of tenure for tenants, a living wage for agricultural labourers and the recognition of peasant unions.

The formation of congress ministers in a majority of the provinces in early 1937 marked the beginning of a new phase in the growth of the peasant movement.

The political atmosphere in the country underwent a marked change, increased civil liberties a new sense of freedom, a heightened sense of expectation that the ministries would bring in pro-people measures.

The different ministers introduced varying kinds of agrarian legislation for debt relief, restoration of land lost during the depression, for security of tenure to tenants and this provided an impetus for the mobilisation of the peasantry.

The Chief form of mobilisation was through the holdings of Kisan conferences or meetings at the Thana, taluqa, district and provincial level. at which peasant demands would be aired and resolutions passed. These conferences would be addressed by local, provincial and all India leaders.
message of the movements to the peasants in an appealing manner. The effect on the surrounding areas was powerful indeed and peasants returned from these meetings with a new sense of their own strength.

In Malabar in Kerala a powerful peasant movement developed as a result of the efforts mainly of CSP activities that had been working among the peasants since 1934, touring villages and setting up peasant associations. The main demand around which the movements developed were for the abolition of feudal levies, renewal fees, advance rent and stopping of eviction of tenants by landlords.

In Coastal Andhra too the mobilisation of peasants proceeded on an unprecedented scale.

In Coastal Andhra, the weapon of peasant marches had been used effectively since 1933. Peasant Marches would converge on the district or taluqa headquarters and present a list of demands to the authorities.

One of the main demands was for debt relief and this was incorporated in the legislation passed by the congress ministry and widely appreciated in Andhra.

Punjab was another centre of Kisan activity. The pattern of mobilisation was the familiar one- Kisan workers toured villages enrolling Kisan Sabha and congress members, organising meetings, mobilising people for the tehsil, district and provincial level conference. The main demands related to the reduction of taxes and a moratorium on debts.

Jathas marched to the district headquarters and huge demonstrations were held. The culmination was the Lahore Kisan marcha
in 1939 in which hundreds of Kisans from many districts of the province courted arrest. A different kind of struggle took out in Multan and Montgomery canal colony areas. Here large private companies that had leased this recently colonised land from the government and some big landlords insisted on recovering a whole range of feudal prices for the sharecroppers who tilled the land. The kisan leaders organised the tenants to resist these exactions which had recently been declared illegal by a government notifications and there were strikes by cultivators in some areas in which they refused to pick cotton and harvest the crops.

The peasant movement in Punjab was mainly located in the Central districts the most active being the districts of Jullundar, Amristar, Hoshiarpur, Lyallpur and Sheikhpura. The Muslim tenants at will of western Punjab, the most backward part of the province, as well the Hindu peasants of south-Eastern Punjab (present day Haryana) largely remained outside the ambit of the Kisan movement.

The princely states in Punjab also witnessed a major out break of peasant discontent. The most powerful movement emerged in Patiala and was based on the demand for restoration of lands illegally seized by a landlord–official combine through the various forms of deceit and intimidations. The tenants refused to pay the batai (Share rent) to their biswedars (landlords). This struggle continued intermittently till 1953 when legislation enabling the tenants to become owners of their land was passed.

In other parts of the country as well, the mobilization of peasants around the demands for security of tenure, abolition of feudal levies, reduction of taxes and debt relief made major headway.
In Assam a no rent struggle continued for six months against zamindari oppression.

In Orissa the Utkal Provincial Kisan Sabha organised by Malati Chowdhary and others in 1935 succeeded in getting the Kisan manifesto accepted by the PCC as part of its election manifesto and the ministry that followed introduced significant agrarian legislation.

In the Orissa states, a powerful movement in which tribals also participated was led on the question of forced labour, rights in forests and the reduction of rent. Major clashes occurred in Dhenukanal and thousands fled the state to escape repression.

The risings tide of peasant awakening was checked by the outbreak of world war-II which brought about the resignation of the congress ministries and the launching of the severe repression against left-wing and Kisan Sabha leaders and workers because of their anti war stance.

Nevertheless, during the war years the Kisan Sabha continued to play an important role in various kinds of relief work for example in the Bengal famine of 1943.

The end of the war followed by the negotiations for the transfer of power and the anticipation of freedom, marked a qualitatively new stage in the development of the peasant movement. Many struggles that had been left off in 1939 were renewed. The demand for zamindari abolition was pressed with a greater sense of urgency.

In British India, it was the tebhaga struggle in Bengal that held the limelight. In late 1936 the sharecroppers of Bengal began to assert that
they would no longer pay a half share of their crop to the jotedars but only one-third and that before divisions the crop would be stored in their Khamaras (godowns) and not that of the jotedars.

They were encouraged by the fact that the Bengal land Revenue commission popularly known as the Floud Commission had already made this recommendation in its report to the government.³

CONCLUSION

It can be asserted that perhaps the most important contribution of the peasant movements that covered large areas of the sub-continent in the 30s and 40s was that even when they did not register immediate success they created the climate which necessitated the post-independence agrarian reforms. The zamindari abolition comes about by the popularisation of the demand by the Kisan Sabha.

The immediate demands on which struggles were fought in the pre-independence days were the reduction of taxes, the abolition of illegal cesses of feudal levies and begar, the ending of oppression by landlords and their agents, the reduction of debts, restoration of illegally seized lands, security of tenure for tenants.

These demands were based on the existing consciousness of the peasantry of their just and legitimate rights.

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³ India's struggle for Independence by Bipin Chandra Pgs. 344-358.
These struggles corroded the power of the landed classes in many ways and thus prepared the ground for the transformation of the structure itself. The Kisan movement was faced with the task of transforming the peasants' consciousness and building movements based on the transformed consciousness.

The main focus of the peasant struggle was on mobilisation through meetings, conferences, rallies, demonstrations and formation of Kisan Sabhas.

The relationship of the peasant movement with the national movement continued to be one of a vital and integral nature. For the areas where the peasant movement was active were usually the ones that had been drawn into the earlier national struggle.

It was the spread of the national movement that had created the initial conditions required for the emergence of peasant struggles—a politicised and conscious peasantry and active political workers capable of and willing to perform the task of organization and leadership.

Kisan movement based itself on the ideology of nationalism. Its cadres and leaders carried the message not only of organisation of the peasantry on class lines but also of national freedom. The growth and development of the peasant movement was thus indissolubly linked with the national struggle for freedom.  

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Gandhiji said, “Leave India to God or to anarchy. This orderly disciplined anarchy should go and if as a result there is complete anarchy, I would risk it.”

The famous “Quite India” resolution was passed by the Bombay session of the AICC on 8th Aug. 1942. This was followed by a call for mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, inevitably under Gandhi with the significant rider that if congress leadership was removed by the arrest “every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his ownguide.”

Quite India, “Bharat Choro”. This simple but powerful slogan launched the legendary struggle, which became famous by the name of the “August Revolution”.

The circumstances in which the resistance was offered were most adverse faced by the national movement until then – using the justification of the war effort, the government had armed itself with draconian measures and suppressed even basic liberties. Virtually any political activity, however peaceful and ‘legal’ was at this time, an illegal and revolutionary activity.

Why had it become necessary to launch a movement in these difficult times for one, Britain was unwilling to offer an honourable settlement and a real constitutional advance during the war, and that she was determined to continue India’s unwilling partnership in the war effort.

It convinced even congressmen like Nehru and Gandhiji, who did not want to do anything to hamper the anti-fascist war effort that any further silence would be tantamount to accepting the right of the British Government to decide India's fate without any reference to the wishes of her people.

Gandhiji had been as clear as Nehru that he did not want to hamper the anti-fascist struggle, but by the spring of 1942 he became increasingly convinced of the inevitability of a struggle. Gandhiji drafted a resolution for the congress working committee calling for Britain's withdrawal and adopting of non-violent non-cooperation against any Japanese invasion.

Apart from British obduracy there were other factors that made a struggle both inevitable and necessary. Popular discontent a products of rising prices and war time shortages was gradually mounting. High handed government actions such as the commandeering of boats in Bengal and Orissa to prevent their being used by the Japanese had led to considerable anger among the people.

This discontentment was enhanced by the growing feeling of an imminent British collapse. The news of allied reverses and British withdrawals from South East Asia and Burma and the trains bringing wounded soldiers from the Assam-Burma border confirmed this feeling.

Combined with this was the impact of the manner of the British evacuation from Malaya and Burma. It was common knowledge that the British had evacuated the white residents and generally left the subject people to their fate. Letters from Indians in South East Asia to their relatives in India were full of graphic accounts of British betrayal and their being left at the mercy of the dreaded Japanese.
Was it not only to be expected that they would repeat the performance in India in the event of a Japanese occupation.

In fact, one major reason for the leadership of the national movement thinking it necessary to launch a struggle was their feeling that the people were becoming demoralised and that in the event of a Japanese occupation might not resist at all. In order to build up their capacity to resist Japanese aggression, it was necessary to draw them out of this demoralised state of mind and convince them of their own power.

The faith in the stability of the British rule had reached such a low that there was a run on the banks and people withdrew deposits from post-office saving accounts and started hoarding gold, silver and coins.

Gandhiji’s speech delivered in his usual quiet and unhistorical style had the most electrifying impact.

“You have only placed all your power in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance for the congress demands. The process is likely to take two or three weeks but, you may take it form me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroys for ministries. I’m not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. May be he will propose the abolition of salt tax, the drink evil etc. But I will say: “Nothing less than freedom.” He followed this up with the now famous exhortation. Do or Die.” Here is a mantra, a short one you may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is “Do or Die”.
"We shall either free India or die in the attempt. We shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery."

Gandhiji speech also contained specific instructions for different sections of the people. Government servants wouldn't yet be asked to resign, but they should openly declare their allegiance to the congress, soldiers were also not to leave their posts, but they were to 'refuse to fire on own people.' Princes were asked to 'accept the sovereignty of your own people', instead of paying homage to a foreign power. And the people of the princely states were asked to declare that they were part of the Indian nation and that they would accept the leadership of the princes. Students were to give up studies if they were sure they would continue to remain firm till independence was achieved.

Gandhiji proposed in the working committee that peasants who have the courage and are prepared to risk their all, should refuse to pay the land revenue. Tenants were told that the congress holds that the land belongs to those who work on it and no one else. ²

The Britishers got very much more than they had bargained for, instead of civil disobedience of the 1932 scale which could be crushed with relative ease there developed from 9th August onwards what Linlithgow privately described on 31st August as "by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857 the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed for the world for reasons of military security" (telegram to churchill).

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². India's struggle for freedom by Bipin Chandra Pgs. 457-460.
Meanwhile price were going up (a 60 point rise in food grains for instance in eastern U.P. between April and August 1942) and there were shortages particularly rice and salt. The British, who were running almost efficient war economy at home based on egalitarian rationing made little serious effort in their colony to check a rampant black market and profiteering in food led to the terrible famine of 1943 in Bengal. The synchronisation rising prices and shortages with the coming of a large number of Allied troops led to not unfounded fears that the food reserves of the country were being depleted to feed the army. Bureaucratic mismanagement of the war had reached a climax in the Bengal order to seize all country boats and destroy them. Even house-to-house communication required boats in many parts of Bengal during the monsoon – 'to deprive people in East Bengal of boats is like cutting of vital limbs.' 3 (Gandhi in Harijan 3rd May 1942).

Regarding the implications of Quit India Movement Gandhiji said –
"In terms of non-violence Quit India is healthy potent cry of the soul. It is not a slogan. But means the end, through means purely truthful and non-violent of the foreign rule and domination. It does not mean a foreigner’s destruction but his willing conversion to Indian life. In this scheme there is no room for hatred of foreigners. He is a man even as we are. It is fear of him that gives rise to hatred. Fear gone, there can be no hatred."

"Thus his conversion implies our conversion. If we cease to be inferiors he cannot be our superior. His arsenals and his weapons typified in their extreme in the atom bomb should have no terror of us. Must I do the evil before I shun it? Is it not enough to know the evil to shun it. If

not we should be sincere enough to admit it that we love evil too well to give it up.”

“Let us assume that the foreign rule is ended what should the foreigner do? He could hardly be considered free, when he was protected by the British arms, as a free man he will discover that it was wrong to possess priviledges, which the millions of India could not enjoy. He will love doing his duty as behoves a son of India. He will no longer live at India’s expense. On the contrary he will give India all his talents and by his services render himself indispensable to the land of his adoption.”

“If this is true of the Europeans how much more there it must be of those Anglo Indians an others who have adopted the European manners and customs in order to be classed as Europeans demanding preferential treatment? All such people will find themselves ill at ease, if they expect continuation of the favoured treatment hitherto enjoy by them. They will feel thankful that they will be disburdened of the preferential treatment to which they had no right by any known cannon of reasoning. 4

Speaking after the evening prayer on May, 30 Gandhi observed that he had been talking them not to look to London or to the Viceroy, but to look to themselves. He did not mean to suggest that Englishman in London were bad men or that the Viceroy was not a good man. He believed that they were good men. But one did not want the interference of even good men in one’s domestic affairs.

The Britishers in the civil services could stay on if the Indian Government would keep them. But

they had to stay on their responsibility. Not a single British soldier would be left for their protection and their safety would be in their winning the goodwill of the Indians through service, and the same thing applied to the British traders and businessman. That was the meaning of quit India. Let them look at their duty, while we look to ours.  

THE ALL INDIA PATTERN

The early morning round up of congress leaders on 9th August unleashed an unprecedented and countrywide wave of mass fury.

Three broad phases can be distinguished in the Quit India movement. The first massive and violent but quickly suppressed was predominately urban and included hartals, strikes and clashes with the police and army in most cities. Bombay was the main storm centre. Calcutta witnessed hartals from 10th – 17th Aug. These were violent clashes with heavy casualties in Delhi and in Patna Control over the city was virtually lost for two days after a famous confrontation in front of the secretariat, on 11th Aug.

"The Tata Steel plant was totally closed down for 13 days from 20 Aug. in a strike in which the sole labour slogan was that they will not resume work until a national government has been formed."

At Ahmedabad the textile strike lasted for three and a half months. The urban middle class was extremely prominent in this first phase spearheaded by students.

From the middle of August however, the focus shifted to the countryside like Benaras, Patna and Cuttack, destroying communications on a massive scale and leading to a veritable peasant rebellion against white authority. Northern and Western Bihar and Eastern U.P. Midnapur in Bengal and pockets in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Orissa were the major centres of the second phase, which saw the installation of a number of local ‘National Governments’ which were usually short – lived.

The movement from about the end of September entered its longest but also least formidable phase. This was characterised by terrorist activity by educated youths directed against communications and police and army installations occasionally rising to the level of guerrilla war (such as the one along the north Bihar – Nepal border, led by Jaiprakash Narian) Part time peasant squads engaged informing by day and sabotage activities by night, and in some pockets secret parallel ‘national governments’ functioned.

Official statistics give some indication both to the extent of the upsurge as well as of the intense repression, which was, unleashed to crush the movement. By the end of 1943, (91,836) people had been arrested with the highest figures coming from Bombay Presidency (24416), U.P. (16796) and Bihar (16,202). 208 police outposts, 332 railway stations and 945 post offices had been destroyed or severely damaged and there had been 664 bomb explosions. Bihar headed the list of police stations stormed by mass action (72 out of 208) but recorded only 8 bomb incidents as compared to 447 in Bombay - a clear indication of greater popular participation in Bihar and more organised terrorist activity in Bombay.
SOCIAL COMPOSITION

"A cross section of the movement in social terms reveals, rather short lived and limited role of labour. The Calcutta Industrial belt was also largely quiet and in both places community opposition to the movement probably played a considerable role in restraining the worker’s. Apart from Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad, labour participation remained considerable for several months in smaller centres like Ahmadnagar and Poona, where there had been little community activity and Gandhian influence had contributed to cordial relations between labour and capital."

Unlike in the Civil disobedience days, middle class students were very much in the forefront in 1942 whether in urban clashes, as organisers of sabotage or inspirers of peasant rebellion. What made the August movement so formidable however was the massive upsurge of the peasantry.

Statistical analysis of the crowd in east U.P. West Bihar region indicates that far from being a movement of habitual criminals or hooligans 1942 was essentially on upsurge of peasant small holders.

1942 Clearly surpassed all previous congress led movements in its level of anti-British militancy, the extent of anti-British sentiments as in 1857 reduced internal class tensions and social radicalism.

The characteristic feature of this movement was that private property was not attacked. 6

In Feb. 1943 a striking new development provided a new burst of political activity. Gandhiji commenced on a fast on 10th Feb. for twenty-one days. This was his answer to the government, which had been constantly exhorting him to condemn the violence of the people in the Quit India Movement. Gandhiji not only refused to condemn the people’s resort to violence but also unequivocally held the government responsible for it. Gandhiji vowed to register his protest, in the only way open to him when in Jail was by fasting.

The popular response to the news of the fast was immediate and overwhelming. All over the country, there were hartals, demonstrations and strikes, Calcutta and Ahemdabad were particularly active.

Public meeting demanded his release and the government was bombarded with thousands of letters and telegrams from all walks of life—students and youth, men of trade and commence, lawyers, ordinary citizens and labour organisations.

From across the seas, the demand for his release was made by newspapers such as Manchester Guardians, New Statesmen, Nation, News Chronicle, Chicago Sun, as well as by the British Communist party, the citizens of London and Manchester, the Women’s International league, the Australian council of Trade Unions. The U.S. Government too brought pressure to bear.

The fast had done, what it had been intended to do. The public morale was raised, the anti-British feeling heightened and an opportunity for political activity provided.
SIGNIFICANCE OF QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

A significant feature of Quit India movement was the emergence of what came to be known as parallel governments in some parts of the country. The first one was proclaimed in Ballia in East U.P. in Aug. 1942 though it could not survive for long, and when the soldiers marched in, they found the leaders had fled.

In Tamluk in the Midnapur district of Bengal, the Jatiya Sarkar came into existence on 17th Dec. 1942 and lasted till Sept. 1944. Tamluk was one area where Gandhian constructive work had made considerable headway. Jatiya Sarkar, under took cyclone relief work, gave grants to schools. It set up arbitration courts and distributed the surplus paddy of the area to the poor. Being located in a relatively remote area, it could continue its activities with comparative ease.

Latara in Maharashtra emerged as the base of the longest lasting and effective parallel government.

This phase was marked by attacks on government collaborators, informers and lower level officials and Robin Hood style robberies. Nyayadan Mandals as people’s courts were set up and justice dispensed. Prohibition was enforced and “Gandhi Marriages” celebrated to which untouchables were invited and at which no ostentation was allowed.

The Quit India movement marked a new high in terms of popular participation in the national movement and sympathy with the nation a cause. Students from colleges and even schools were the most visible elements especially in the early days of August. Women especially college
girls and schoolgirls played a very important role. Aruna Asaf Ali and Sucheta Kripalani were two major women organisers of the underground

Peasants of all strata, well to do as well as poor were the heart of the movement especially in East U.P. and Bihar, Midnapur in Bengal, Satara in Mahashtra, also in other parts including Andhra, Gujarat and Kerala. Many smaller zamindars participated. Big zamindaars maintained a stance of neutrality and refused to assist the British in crushing the rebellion.

A significant feature of the pattern of peasant activity was its total concentration on attacking symbols of British authority and a total lack of any incidents of anti-zamindar violence the breakdown of “Government authority for long period of time provided the opportunity”.

Government officials especially those at the low levels of the police and the administration were generous in their assistance to the movement. They gave shelter, provided information and helped monetarily. In fact the erosion of loyalty to the British Movement of its own officers was one of the most striking aspects of the quit India struggle.

While it is true that Muslim mass participation in the Quit India, movement was not high, yet it is also true that even Muslim league supporters gave help by providing shelter to the underground workers and did not act as informers. Also there was a total absence of any communal clashes, a sure sign that though the movement may not have aroused much support from among the majority of the Muslim masses. It did not arouse their hostility either.
The elements of spontaneity in the movement of 1942 was certainly larger than in the earlier movements, through even in 1919-22 as well as in 1930-31 and 1932, the congress leadership allowed considerable room for popular initiative and spontaneity. In fact the whole pattern of the Gandhian mass movements was that the leaderships chalked out a broad programme of action and left its implementation at the local level to the initiative of the local and grass roots level political activists and the masses. Even in the Civil disobedience movement in 1930, perhaps the most organised of the Gandhian mass movements, Gandhiji signalled the launching of the struggle by the Dandi March and the breaking of Salt laws the leaders and the people at the local level decided whether they were going to stop payment of land revenue and rent or offer satyagraha against forest laws, or picket liquor shops or follow any of the other items of the programme.

The degree of spontaneity and popular initiative was sanctioned by the leadership itself. A resolution passed by the A.I.C.C. on 8th August, 1942, clearly stated, “A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people or when no congress committees can function. When this happens, every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide.”

Apart from this the congress had been ideologically, politically and organizationally preparing for the struggle for along time. In East U.P. and Bihar, the areas of the most intense activity 1942 were preciously the ones in which considerable mobilisation and organisational work had been carried out from 1937 onwards.
In Gujarat Sardar Patel had been touring Bardoli and other areas since June 1942, warning the people of an impending struggle. Gandhiji himself through individual civil disobedience campaign in 1940-41 and more directly since early 1942 had prepared the people for the coming battle.

How did the use of violence in 1942 square with the congress policy of non-violence? For one, these were many who refused to use or sanction violent means and confined themselves to the traditional weaponry of the congress. But many, including staunch Gandhians warranted their use.

Many maintained that the cutting of telegraph wires and blowing up of bridges was all right as long as the human life was not taken. Others flatly admitted that they could not square the violence they used or connived at, with their belief in non-violence but they did it all the same. Gandhiji refused to condemn the violence of the people because he saw it as a reaction to the much bigger violence of the state. In 1942 Gandhiji had come round to the view that mass participation would not be restricted as a result of violence.

The great significance of this historic movement was that it placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement. After Quit India there could be no retreat. Any future negotiation with the British Government could only be on the manner of the transfer of power. Independence was no longer a matter of bargain.  