CHAPTER - I

BACKGROUND

(i) SALIENT FEATURES OF THE CENTRAL PROVINCES AND BERAR.

(ii) MEANING AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.
SALIENT FEATURES OF THE CENTRAL PROVINCES AND BERAR

Stretching from Bundelkhand in the north to the Madras Presidency in the south, from the Frontier of Bengal in the east to the Malwa Plateau and Deccan in the west, the Central Provinces enjoyed the focal centre of the Indian Peninsula — lying between $17^\circ$, $47^\circ$ and $24^\circ$, $27^\circ$ North and $75^\circ$, $57^\circ$ and $84^\circ$, $24^\circ$ East. Its shape from North-West to South-East approximated to that of a rectangle, boarder at the lower than at the upper extremity. The province was bounded on the north by the Bundelkhand States of Tahri and Panna, on the west and north-west by the British districts of Lalitpur and Chanderi, belonging to the North-western Provinces, the State of Bhopal and Sindhi's dominions; on the south and south-west by Berar and Nizam's dominion; on the south and south-east by the Rajahmundry district of the Madras Presidency; on the east by the Jaypore state, and the Orissa portions of the Lower Provinces of Bengal.

The Province was constituted as a separate administrative unit in 1861 from territories taken from the Peshwa in 1818 and the Maratha State of Nagpur, which had lapsed from failure of heirs in 1852. Berar, which for a considerable previous period had been held on a lease or assignment from the Nizam of Hyderabad, was

incorporated for administrative purposes with the Central Provinces in 1903. In 1905 the bulk of the district of Sambalpur, with five Feudatory States inhabited by an Oriya speaking population, were transferred to Bengal and afterwards to the new province of Bihar and Orissa, while five Feudatory States of Chhota Nagpur were received from Bengal.

The main portion of the province may be divided, from north-west to south-east, into three tracts of upland, alternating with two of plain country. In the north-west the districts of Sagar and Damoh lie on the Vindhyan or Malwa plateau, the southern face of which rises almost sheer from the valley of the Narbada. The general elevation of this plateau varies from 1500 to 2000 feet. The highest part is that immediately over-hanging the Narbada, and the general slope is to the north, the rivers of this area being tributaries of the Jamuna and Ganga. The surface of the country is undulating and broken by frequent low hills covered with a growth of poor and stunted forest. The second division consists of the long and narrow valley of the Narbada, walled in by the Vindhyan and Satpura hills to the north and south, and extending for a length of about 200 miles from Jabalpur to Handia, with an average width of twenty miles. The valley is situated to the south of the river, and is formed of deep alluvial deposits of extreme richness. South of the valley the Satpura range or third division stretches across the province, from Amarkantak in the east (the sacred source of Narbada) to Asirgarh in
the Nimar district in the west, where its two parallel ridges bound the narrow valley of the Tapti river. The greater part consists of an elevated plateau, in some parts merely a rugged mass of hills hurled together by volcanic action, in others a succession of bare stony ridges and narrow fertile valleys, in which the soil has been deposited by drainage. The general elevation of the plateau is 2000 feet, but several of the peaks rise to 3500, and a few to more than 4000 feet. The Satpuras form the most important watershed of the province, and in addition Narbada and Tapti, the Wardha and Wainganga rivers rise in these hills, to the east a belt of hill country continues from the Satpuras to the wild and rugged highlands of the Chhota Nagpur plateau, on which are situated the five states anned to the province.

Extending along the southern and eastern faces of the Satpura range lies the fourth geographical division, to the west the plain of Berar and Nagpur, watered by the Purna, Wardha and Wainganga rivers, and further east the Chhattisgarh plain, which forms the upper basin of the Mahanadi. South of the plain lies another expanse of hill and plateau comprised in the zamindari estates of Chanda and the Chhattisgarh Division and the Baster and Kanker Feudatory States. This vast area, covering about 24,000 square miles, the greater part of which consists of dense forests traversed by precipitous mountains and ravines.1

Area and Population

The British districts of the Central Provinces occupied an area of 82,109 square miles with a population of 1,08,37,444; Berar of 17,767 square miles with a population of 30,75,316; and the Feudatory states of 31,176 square miles with a population of 20,66,900. The Central Provinces in point of area came sixth and of population seventh among the provinces of India. ¹

Administrative Set-up

Nagpur was the capital city of the Central Provinces and Berar. The administration was carried out by the Governor² aided by a Secretary, a junior Secretary and an Assistant Secretary. In addition to his general duties of superintendence, the Governor was also charged with the special supervision of the Revenue and Executive departments.

The province was divided for administrative purposes into five divisions, each controlled by a Commissioner; 22 districts each in charge of a Deputy Commissioner; and 83 tahsils each in charge of a Tahsildar.³ Incorporated with the districts were 106 Zamindaris and jagirs, or large estates, separately assessed on somewhat favourable terms, and held generally on a privileged tenure. These were attached to the

¹. Central Provinces and Berar: A Review of the Administration of the Province, Vol. 11, 1921-22, Nagpur 1923, Chapter 1, Part III, pp. 1 & 2
². Before the enforcement of Montague-Chelmsford reforms in 1920, the head of the Province was known as Chief Commissioner; Sir Frank Sly was Chief Commissioner of the Province in 1920 and later Governor from 1920 to 1924.
Hoshangabad, Chhindwara, Chanda, Bhandara, Balaghat, Raipur, Bilaspur and Durg districts. The Central Provinces also included the 15 Feudatory States of Makri, Bastar, Kanker, Nandgaon, Khairagarh, Chhuikhadan, Kawardha, Sakti, Raigarh, Sarangarh, Jashpur, Sirguja, Udaipur, Korea and (Changbhakar) forming the territories of the hereditary Ruling Chiefs, whose relations with the local government were controlled by a Political Agent appointed for this purpose.

**Society**

The province was the combination of two separate linguistic regions. The Central Provinces mainly consisted of Hindi speaking districts, whereas Berar was predominantly a Marathi-speaking area. The inhabitants of the Hindi region were mostly people who had migrated from Northern India, whereas the inhabitants of the Marathi-speaking region were migrants from Western India. Each region had its own historical tradition that was connected with the country, either of its adoption.

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1. In this work, place-names are spelt according to current usage in India, except in quotations using older forms; in referring to places which no longer exist, and in citing reference which use another form.

2. With the exception of Nagpur Division, which included four Marathi-speaking districts, they were: Nagpur, Wardha, Bhandara and Chanda.

3. As per the Census of 1921, out of a total population of 1,39,12,700 in the province 75,07,158 spoke Hindi or Chhattisgarhi and 47,73,561 spoke Marathi. Census of India 1921, Vol. XI. Central Provinces and Berar, Part II, Tables.
As a result of various industries such as cotton mills, minerals resources and better transportation facilities, the Marathi-region enjoyed a better economic position than that of Hindi region. In comparison with the Hindi region, the Marathi region also had better educational institutions, newspapers and literary traditions.

The historical, social, cultural and economic differences existing in these two regions resulted in the selection by each region of its political leaders from among its own ranks as those best qualified to advance their regional interests.

The leaders of the Hindi region consisted of Kanya Kubja and other Hindi speaking Brahmins, Rajputs and Marwaris\(^1\) while in the Marathi region they consisted of Maharashtrian Brahmins, Marathas and Marwari traders.\(^2\) By 1918 politicians from the middle class also emerged as the leaders of society. The leaders in each region always tried to represent their social customs and traditions and thus maintained their regional identity. Till 1920

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1. Prominent leaders of the Hindi region include:

2. Marathi region include:
the leaders of the Marathi region led the provincial policies. Most of them were the followers of Tilak, whereas the Hindi region was mainly influenced by the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi.

For Central Provinces and Berar, the year 1930 can be regarded a momentum political period for study. During this period not only political upheaval was seen but power was transferred from the Marathi speaking politicians to the Hindi speaking ones. On national level also the upper India Hindi speaking politicians had an upper hand in the All India Congress and their domination kept increasing. The events in change of leadership happened at such social and economic stage but these were entirely different for Central Provinces and Berar. In the province the socio-economic upheaval created a political bifurcation on linguistic basis and created a patch for Hindi speaking Congressmen to gain their prominence.
Meaning and Origin

Civil Disobedience means a deliberate disobedience of the law of the government of State. This term "Civil Disobedience" owes its origin to the writings of an American thinker and activist Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). His disobedience of the law by non-payment of a poll tax was primarily a protest against a government which supported slavery. He propounded this theory in an essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience".\(^1\) Gandhiji was so impressed by his ideas that he decided to use this as an instrument of fighting the British government out of India.\(^2\) He first used this instrument in South Africa. He must have found similarities of conditions of the slaves of the mid Nineteenth Century -- America and Indian labourers in South Africa. He was wrestling his mind to develop techniques of resistance to be adopted against the tyrannical government.

Respect for the law and obedience to it are basic elements of a good civil life. But there may be circumstances when deliberate disobedience of the law is

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2. Ibid.
essential for some greater good. If the law is unjust, or if it supports an oppressive and cruel social and economic system, will it be justified for the citizens to take law in their own hands or take a decision to break the law? This is a difficult question to answer. But Gandhiji believed in strong individualism and had an immense faith in the capacity of men to transform a political system. For him the voice of the enlightened conscience of an individual was superior to the dictates of the laws of the state. The ethics of Civil Disobedience, therefore, stem from an individual's "conscience". "Soul-force" is higher than any other force. Gandhiji realised that the term "civil disobedience" does not capture this meaning of resistance so he coined a new word "satyagraha". "Satyagraha" means holding steadfastly to the truth. It is "Truth-force". Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, "Soul-force".¹

Gandhiji was a political thinker as well as an activist, a practitioner of civil disobedience who fought against an unjust regime. He was a man of action. His idea of civil disobedience changed with changing events. His campaign against injustice started in South Africa during 1893-1906. He was fighting against an unjust law discriminating Indian's from the other citizens. Later, in India he took up the leadership of a fight against injustice exploitation and oppression in 1920. After the

¹. Young India, 23 March 1921
Non-cooperation Movement failed he took up the entire responsibility on his own shoulders and only after a lot of brooding, thinking and preparation launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhiji believed in strong individualism. He believed in the clear conscience of man-- in his 'soul-force'. He was a philosophical anarchist who repudiated state if it comes in conflict with the 'soul-force'. He tried to develop in the people, through Satyagraha, the capacity to resist the state authority, when required. He was against the unquestioned obedience to the laws of the state. "It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws contrary to our conscience ...... so long as the superstition that man should obey unjust laws exist, so long with their slavery exist."¹ Not only this, he promotes civil disobedience in clear words, "disobedience to the law of the state becomes a peremptory duty when it comes in conflict with the law of God."² Thus Gandhiji was very open in his views regarding civil disobedience -- for him it was a right as well as a duty of a citizen to disobey the laws of the state if it offends their moral sense. Satyagraha was not a new word for India. Gandhi said that it is the special weapon of Indians. The peasants and the people of India, in ancient times used it as a weapon against an unjust law made by a King. The people, the public (praja) used to refuse to

cooperate with a tyrant king—-that too, was satyagraha. Gandhi insisted that it was essentially an Indian creed.¹

Gandhi asserted that its origin had deep connection with the idea of purity of heart and reasonable means used by any individual or society to achieve his goal for the welfare of one and all. An ardent believer in soul force, Gandhi referred to Rama, Jesus, the Buddha, Nanak, Mohammed, Shankara, Kabir, Dayanand, Ramakrishna, Harishchandra, Prahlad, Sudama, Nala Damyanti, Angada and numerous other religious reformers. He read writings on them and practised their preaching in his technique and ideology to gain freedom from the British.²

In fact the word Satyagraha had a romantic origin in the life of Gandhi. It was coined by him in 1906 when he was struggling for the grant of due rights for emigrant Indians in South Africa. During this struggle he was keen to give it an impressive name which could touch the hearts of the common people. Probably, he tried to coin a convenient word in the language of his followers. Through his journal 'Indian Opinion' he offered a small prize for the best suggestion in this regard. One of the contestants suggested the simple appealing word 'Sadagraha' and he was awarded the prize. But Gandhi modified it to Satyagraha and doing so he said that this word expressed better his ideology and thought of truth.

2. S.R.Bakshi, Gandhi and his Techniques of Satyagraha New Delhi, 1987, p.3
The Nature of Civil Disobedience

Gandhiji justified civil disobedience on moral and ethical grounds. From this point emanates the two aspects of civil disobedience or satyagraha or passive resistance—moral and political. In other words we may say that satyagraha has a dual nature—'Moral' because it is closely connected with 'conscience of man' and 'Political' because it is straightway defying and breaking the laws of the state.

(a) Moral Satyagraha:

For Gandhiji satyagraha is essentially a moral act. It is applied to any just cause—be it political, social or economic. It does not aim to destroy, defeat or pain a wrong doer but to make him realize his mistake, repent and correct himself; thus converting him from wrong to right by the power of his love and truth and to provide a peaceful adjustment of differences. In Gandhiji's own words, "it is the vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's own self." A satyagrahi loves the opponent as a human being and aims at his wrong deeds. He seeks the good of all through service, and if opposition arises, he invites suffering on himself rather than inflicting it on others. He is even prepared for the final sacrifice of

1. Ibid, p.2
life in order to preserve truth, for the human body is considered a mere vehicle for the realization of truth through love. This is the moral aspect of civil disobedience or satyagraha.

(b) Political Satyagraha:

Gandhiji made this concept of satyagraha a political doctrine of mass action and brought about the political aspect of satyagraha. This philosophy materialised into action in form of 'Civil Disobedience Movement'. This was a mass movement for Gandhi had immense faith in the strength of the masses. "Any thing that millions can do together becomes changed with a unique power"1 But masses have to be trained. Gandhiji laid a great emphasis on their training for they were not simple men and women -- they were satyagrahis and the spirit of service, sacrifice and renunciation had to be cultivated in them. A satyagrahi must realize in a concrete way, his moral and spiritual unity with all human beings. For this purpose Gandhiji insisted on their training. A true satyagrahi only can lead a Satyagraha or a Civil Disobedience Movement.

Method of Non-Violence

Non-violence is an essential ingredient of civil disobedience2 -- It is a moral necessity -- a soul force

1. Harijan, 7 April, 1946.
2. Sarvodaya, 135. quoted Gandhi Vichar Ratna, 1967, p. 246
so strong that the weakest in body can defy, the whole world in arms against him. The philosophy behind civil disobedience is that the opponent can be won over by love and by bearing pains on oneself. A satyagrahi must be non-violent in all forms -- thoughts, words and deeds. The test of a satyagrahi's non-violence comes in the stress and strain of a conflict. He aims at a bilateral victory -- winning and winning the hearts. His technique seeks to liquidate antagonism -- not antagonists. Non-violence is a way of life for a satyagrahi.

Gandhiji was striving for the establishment of a humane and non-violent society standing on the feet of justice and welfare for all. He felt that the ultimate object of a man's life is self-realization. Self-realization means realization of "the greatest good of all" or "Sarvodaya". It includes political progress, for political degeneration is a great hindrance to moral and spiritual regeneration. The unjust, tyrannical British rule was challenged by this truth force -- the satyagraha because no political, moral or spiritual progress was possible under foreign dominance.

Gandhiji was a Utopian. He dreamt of a non-violent state in accordance with the principles of satyagraha. As soon as people acquire self-control and learn to co-operate among themselves and non-co-operate with the

1. Ibid
2. Harijan, 29 April, 1939
exploiter, a non-violent state will emerge spontaneously as a by-product of the practice of non-violence. Gandhiji was deeply influenced by his surroundings and environments. He was a visionary because he had to build up a new India. He had his dreams about an independent India. But first he had to fight the British government out. That is why he launched the Civil Disobedience Movement which was a sum total of his thinking and philosophy.