CHAPTER - V

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It is possible to draw interesting conclusions from the study of 'The Gandhian Movements and Constructive Programmes in Madhya Pradesh' during 1920 – 1947, popularly called Gandhian Era.

One of the most interesting of these conclusions pertain to the rise of political and national awakening among the urban and rural population of different social and economic groups of Madhya Pradesh. On account of this, Madhya Pradesh played an important part in the freedom struggle, under the leadership of Gandhi, the 'Father of the Nation'.

The growth of the English educated middle classes in modern times not only influenced India but also many countries across the world. These classes later became the founder of the Indian National Congress in 1885. During 1919-1947, the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi spearheaded the Freedom Movements in India and adopted many constructive programmes to uplift the condition of Indian society at large.

Gandhi was an ardent follower of the principle of love, truth, non-violence and Satyagraha. He applied his theory of non-violence first in South Africa and then used his populist technique of Satyagraha to redress the grievances of rural groups of Champaran, Kheda and urban group of Ahmedabad.

Gandhi demonstrated the potential of Satyagraha for the first time against Rowlatt Act in India. He achieved remarkable success
in drawing uninitiated sections of Indian society in Rowlatt Satyagraha. In Marathi and Hindi region, the nationalist activities were largely confined to the urban middle classes. However, this class under the influence of Tilak did not actively support the Rowlatt Satyagraha in Marathi region. Further the Satyagraha could arouse the interest of very few people in the Hindi region because of unavailability of the people belonging to the urban middle classes.

The people of Madhya Pradesh responded much more enthusiastically to the Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-1922. In this campaign Gandhi won the support of middle classes, the merchants and the lower classes of the towns and countryside. Support for the NCO was greater in the towns of the Madhya Pradesh, with the result that campaign provided the more severe challenge to the Government.

Gandhi also succeeded in involving members of the wealthy trading communities of the provinces in his movements in the course of the ensuing twenty years. Gandhi also widened the social base of the nationalist movement by involving the members of districts and local bodies, the legislatures, the streets of the cities, the fields and forests of the countryside.

During 1920-22 Gandhiji launched the Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movements for redressing the twin wrongs of Khilafat and Punjab. Responding to his call, the people of Madhya Pradesh, Hindus and Muslims alike associated themselves with the national activities. In the Non-cooperation Movement, the people of Hindi region of Madhya
Pradesh whole-heartedly participated in the movement, whereas the call evoked a little response from the Tilakites of Marathi region, consisting of Nagpur and Berar. The Tilakites were unwilling to allow Gandhi to weaken their influence in the Madhya Pradesh. The Marathi leaders believed that Gandhi was trying to dominate the politics of the province. They also opposed Gandhi because they were confident that Tilak's practical and aggressive tactics could alone win freedom for India. They were also of the view that Gandhi's weapons of Non-violent Non-cooperation Satyagraha would fail to achieve the desired goal of 'Swaraj'.

On the whole, the Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movement had a remarkable success in the province. However, the boycott programmes - the 'triple boycott', - boycott of legislatures, law courts and the educational institutions and other subsidiary items i.e. boycott of liquor, boycott of foreign goods, clothes and establishment of National schools and National panchayats could not paralyse the British-Raj but they did remove the paralysis of masses by infusing a new sense of self-respect and fearlessness among them.

The Nagpur Congress of 1920 adopted the linguistic principle for the realignment of provinces. As a result, the Madhya Pradesh was divided into three separate units, that of Hindi speaking area and Marathi speaking areas of Nagpur and Berar. This enabled the local politicians to develop their influence in their respective regions.

The Jhanda Satyagraha, launched during March 1923 to August 1923 occupies an important place in the freedom movement in
Madhya Pradesh. The Jhanda Satyagraha provided much needed impetus to the national awareness not only in the state but in the country as a whole.

Following these movements, the congressmen of Madhya Pradesh also engaged themselves towards the various items of constructive programme. These consisted of prohibition of liquor, spinning and weaving of Khadi, uplift of depressed communities, promoting Hindu-Muslim unity and opening of temples and wells to depressed communities, during 1922 to 1930.

The political events in the country during 1927 to 1930 forced the congress to launch the campaign of Civil Disobedience during 1930 to 1934. The Madhya Pradesh responded magnificently to the Gandhi's call. The campaign of Civil Disobedience aroused the political consciousness of vast number of people in the Hindi and Marathi regions. The campaign received the overwhelming support from different social groups in towns and drew villagers and aboriginal inhabitants of the jungles in both areas.

Among the other forms of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the Jungle Satyagraha, which marked an important feature of the campaign and was successfully launched throughout the Madhya Pradesh. The Congressmen spread the Satyagraha from village to village. After making persistent appeals to the villagers the agitators also drew aboriginal tribes of the Jungles in the Satyagraha. In Madhya Pradesh, the districts of Chanda, Amraoti, Betul, Raipur, Bhandara and Seoni
became the storm centres of Jungle Satyagraha. Violent attacks on forest guards became common during this. In some places No-Tax campaign was also launched.

The campaign of Civil Disobedience also gave an effective challenge to the Government to maintain law and order to a much greater extent than the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920 in the province. It also compelled the government to take effective repressive measures to suppress the movement.

In these circumstances, the Government had no alternative but to accept the challenge. The Government imposed repressive ordinances. Under these, the Government arrested all grades of leaders and imposed on them heavy fines and pronounced lengthy sentences of imprisonment. Under the same ordinance the Government also arrested volunteers in great number; restricted gathering of people; imposed censorship of the press; confiscated the buildings and funds of nationalist organisations; closed down educational institutions and to control the rural agitation resorting to arrests, lathi charges and firing.

Thus the campaign of Civil Disobedience achieved a great success in the province. The Congressmen had two major gains in the campaigns of 1930. Firstly, they dislocated the finances of the province. Secondly, the leaders of the Congress established themselves as the leaders of the people, displacing the influence of Tilakites who had controlled the Marathi region after the death of Tilak.
During 1930 to 1934 the Congressmen also took steps to uplift the depressed community. They did so in the wake of Gandhi's symbolic fast, which triggered off a movement to remove the stigma of untouchability in the province. The congressmen and other leaders opened wells and temples for the depressed community or Harijans, as Gandhi named them.

The last phase of freedom struggle launched during 1937 to 1947, coincided with the formation of first Congress Ministry and launching of the Individual Satyagraha and the Quit India Movement. The first Congress Ministry formed in the Central Provinces and Berar functioned from 14th July 1937 to 10th November 1939. During this period the Congress ministry took effective measures in political, economic and social fields in accordance with the policy of Congress and its election manifesto.

In political field the Congress ministry in Madhya Pradesh released a few remaining political prisoners. Their bonds were cancelled and securities which had been forfeited were refunded to them.

In the economic field, the first step the congress ministry took was to do away with the old coercive measures employed in the collection of land revenue. The ministry also took effective measures for the relief of agricultural indebtedness.

The Congress Ministry also decided to take radical steps to encourage cottage industries for developing cottage industries on scientific and systematic lines. Industrial education was regarded very essential. Hence, during 1937-1939 the Government aided industrial
schools were opened and the number of factories were registered under the Factory Act. In this way, the ministry took steps to encourage cottage industries and use of Khadi.

To improve the condition of labour, Central Province and Berar factories (amendment) Bill 1939 (12 of 1938) was passed. But the analysis shows that the efforts of the Government in economic field were half hearted.

In the field of social reforms on August 1937 the Congress ministry planned to bring total prohibition in the province and enacted Central Provinces and Berar, Excise Act of 1915 in various parts of the province. Various welfare measures for Harijan or depressed community were implemented Central Provinces and Berar Temple Worship Bill (42 of 1939) was presented in the Legislature in August 1939. But it could not be passed and was sent to the Select Committee for re-consideration.

In spite of the initial difficulties, educational programmes were implemented in the province during the Congress regime from 1937 to 1939. Ravishankar Shukla, Minister for Education, initiated Vidya Mandir scheme of education. This scheme was vigorously implemented in order to meet the requirements of 24000 villages, which went without education facilities. After becoming the Prime Minister he continued the expansion of this scheme. A Vidya Mandir Training School was opened in Wardha on 17th April 1937.

To promote the primary education, the congress Ministry introduced a free and compulsory primary education system for boys and
girls on experimental basis. It was suited to the Congress programme of ideal education, which aimed to encourage the spirit of self-help in schools. Accordingly, Central Provinces and Berar (Amendment) Bill 1938 (53 of 1938) was passed. The ministry also took effective measures to increase the enrolment of girls in schools and colleges.

Thus it may be concluded that Congress ministry during its tenure made sincere efforts to improve the conditions of people by the constructive programmes. However, in all the spheres the government efforts could not fully live up to the people’s expectations. The achievements of other congress dominated provinces were greater.

The last phase of the freedom struggle began with the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. On the question of war issue, the Congress ministries including the Central Provinces and Berar Congress ministry resigned on 10th November 1939 and nationalist leaders, yet again plunged themselves into direct struggle against the British Raj.

Due to the forced circumstances, the Congress decided to launch Individual Satyagraha in October 1940. Vinoba Bhave was chosen by Gandhi as first Satyagrahi to initiate the Satyagraha. The Congress dominated provinces followed the suit.

In Madhya Pradesh, Seth Govind Das was chosen as first Satyagrahi. Ravishankar Shukla, D. P. Mishra, Jamnalal Bajaj, Poonam Chand Ranka and other prominent leaders successfully participated in the Satyagraha. In order to train the Congress members to act as active
Satyagrahi, the training camps were opened up at various towns of Madhya Pradesh. Meetings and processions organised were marked by raising slogans. While organising anti-war activities all the prominent leaders were arrested and sent to jails. The Satyagraha got full support from the masses in Madhya Pradesh. It might safely be said that the Individual Satyagraha launched during 1940 to 1941 was mild as compared to Non-Cooperation and C. D. M. movements. To suppress the movement the Government also did not take harsh measures.

The failure of Cripps Mission strengthened the nationalist view that British government would not transfer the power to Indian easily. Therefore, they lost any hope of smooth and peaceful transfer of power.

Hence the Congress was forced to launch a massive struggle against the British Raj. The All India Congress committee meeting held at Bombay approved and endorsed the Gandhi's resolution for 'Quit India' on 8th October 1942. At this meeting of All India Congress Committee, Gandhi gave the slogan of 'Do or Die', which among the masses a wave of patriotism and zeal.

But at this time the Government was prepared to suppress the movement brutally at any cost. On the dawn of 9th August, Gandhi along with other prominent leaders of Congress were quested. The same fate was meted out to the leaders of provinces including Madhya Pradesh. The first grade leaders like R. S. Shukla, D. P. Mishra, Seth Govind Das, Brijlal Biyani, Poonam Chand Ranka, N. B. Khare among others were arrested. The Government went down heavily on Congress
Working Committee, All India Congress Committee and Provincial Congress Committees and declared them unlawful. On account of mass scale arrests the movement became leaderless and took a violent turn. Within eight months barring turn places, the movement was crushed as the government invoked all repressive machinery at its disposal to crush the movement.

The other second grade leaders i.e. Bhawani Prasad Tiwari, Kunji Lal Dubey, Laxman Singh Chauhan, Narsingh Das Agrawal from Hindi region, Maganlal Bagri, R. S. Ruikar, T. J. Kedar and Sant Tukoji from Marathi region were also arrested and sent to jail. Thus the people of Madhya Pradesh actively participated in all sort of activities undertaken in the movement. These activities compelled the British Government and Government of India to consider India's demand for independence.

The Gandhian Movements created political awareness on a mass scale among the people of Madhya Pradesh and in pursuance of this they firmly stood against the British regime. This enabled them to shrug off the fear, which had been accumulated in their hearts for about 200 years against oppressive policies of British Raj.

The Gandhian constructive programmes were effectively implemented by the congressmen in Madhya Pradesh in the diverse fields, particularly in social, economic fields. This greatly improved the social and economic status of the lower classes, Harijans and aboriginal tribes, women of the Madhya Pradesh. In 20th Century, the Gandhian Movements and associated Constructive Programmes enabled women to
come out of their homes and participate in the political, social and economic mainstream of the country. Madhya Pradesh was greatly affected to this.

In addition, the Dyarchy and provincial Autonomy and the consequent legislatures formed, under the Government of India Act 1919 and 1935 respectively played a positive role in freedom struggle as well as in the scheme of constitutional revolution, political education, social and economic legislation.