

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT



- Mahatma Gandhi started the 2nd mass movement viz. the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930 with a salt march from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi Coast.
- Let us see first some of the events which had taken place after the non-cooperation movement which necessitated the Civil Disobedience movement.

SWARAJYA PARTY

- Swaraj Party or the Congress Khilafat Swarajya Party was set up by Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das in 1923.
- They were tired of mass struggles and wanted to participate in elections to the provincial councils that had been set up by the Government of India Act of 1919.
- They felt that it was important to oppose British policies within the councils, argue for reform and also demonstrate that these councils were not truly democratic.
- They also wanted to keep the anti-British spirit of the people alive since NonCooperation Movement was suspended.
- But young leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose pressed for more radical mass agitation and complete independence.

THE FACTORS WHICH SHAPED INDIAN POLITICS IN THE 1920s

○ **Worldwide Economic Depression**

Agricultural prices began to fall from 1926 and collapsed after 1930. As the demand for agricultural goods fell and exports declined, peasants found it difficult to sell their harvests and pay their revenue.

○ **The Simon Commission**

It was appointed and came to India in February, 1928. It was appointed to look into the working of the Government of India Act of 1919 and to suggest further reforms in the system of administration. The members of the commission were all Englishmen and not a single Indian was included in it. It led to Simon go back agitation.

SIMON COMMISSION

- It was a statutory commission set up by the British under Sir John Simon.
- It was asked to study the constitutional system in India and suggest changes.
- Indians opposed the Simon Commission because:
 - All the members of the commission were Englishmen. There were no Indians in it.
 - It did not provide any hope of Swaraj to Indians.



Sir John Simon



Protests against Simon Commission

MOVEMENT AGAINST SIMON COMMISSION

- There were mass protests hartals and black flag demonstrations all over the country.
- People were chanting the slogan Simon Go Back.
- Anti-Simon committees were formed.

- In Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai who was leading the demonstration against the Simon commission was beaten to death.

LAHORE SESSION OF CONGRESS

The Lahore session of Indian National Congress of 1929 was held under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. The three important decisions taken were the following:

- The attainment of complete independence: It was declared in this session that the chief goal of the Indian National Congress was the attainment of complete independence.
- It was decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement under the leadership of Gandhiji to get the complete independence.
- It was decided in this session to celebrate 26th January as the Independence Day all over the country. Because of its significance the same day was chosen as the Republic day of India.

DEVELOPMENTS THAT LED TO THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

- Indians launched a powerful struggle against the Simon Commission. The government resorted to repression.
- Great Depression made the life of the people highly miserable.
- Lahore Conspiracy case and Meerut Conspiracy case created discontent among the Indians.
- Lahore Congress of 1929 declared Poorna Swaraj as its aim and decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- Gandhiji inaugurated the movement by breaking the Salt Law at Dandi.

SALT MARCH

- Gandhiji decided to start the Civil Disobedience Movement by breaking the salt law.
- Gandhiji and 78 followers started a march on foot from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi [Dandi March].
- On 6 April 1930, they reached Dandi. Gandhiji prepared salt by using sea water, broke the salt law and inaugurated the movement.
- The government imposed heavy tax on salt. Moreover, the production of salt was the monopoly of the government. So, the price of the salt was very high. Therefore, Gandhiji opposed the salt law.

WHY DID MAHATMA GANDHI CHOOSE SALT AS MEDIUM OF PROTEST AGAINST THE BRITISH?

- Mahatma Gandhi found in salt a powerful symbol that could unite the nation.
- On 31 January 1930, he sent a letter to Viceroy Irwin stating eleven demands.
- The most stirring of all was the demand to abolish the salt tax.
- Salt was something consumed by the rich and the poor alike, and it was one of the most essential items of food.
- The tax on salt and the government monopoly over its production revealed the most oppressive face of British rule.



Salt March against the British

MASS CHARACTER OF THE MOVEMENT

- Thousands in different parts of the country broke the salt law, manufactured salt and demonstrated in front of government salt factories.
- As the movement spread, foreign cloth was boycotted, and liquor shops were picketed.
- Peasants refused to pay revenue and *chaukidari* taxes, village officials resigned, and in many places forest people violated forest laws – going into Reserved Forests to collect wood and graze cattle.
- When Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a devout disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, was arrested in April 1930, angry crowds demonstrated in the streets of Peshawar, facing armored cars and police firing. Many were killed.
- When Mahatma Gandhi himself was arrested, industrial workers in Sholapur attacked police posts, municipal buildings, lawcourts and railway stations – all structures that symbolized British rule.
- A frightened government responded with a policy of brutal repression. Peaceful satyagrahis were attacked, women and children were beaten, and about 100,000 people were arrested.

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

- Civil Disobedience Movement was the first struggle to win Poorna Swaraj or Complete Independence.
- It was based on non-violent Satyagraha. Gandhian ideas were widely followed.
- Women participated in large numbers in this movement.
- It was a real mass movement. Different social groups participated.
- It was an open challenge to the British rule. The people openly disobeyed laws.

GANDHI IRWIN PACT

- On 5th March, 1931, Gandhiji called off the movement entering into a pact with Viceroy Lord Irwin.
- He consented to participate in the Round Table Conference.
- The British government agreed to release the political prisoners.
- In December 1931, Gandhiji went to London for the Second Round Table Conference.
- The conference held was unprofitable as nothing fruitful came out of it for India.

SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

- Gandhi Irwin pact was signed on 5th March 1931.

- Gandhiji consented to participate in a Round Table Conference in London.
- In December 1931, Gandhiji went to London to attend the second-round table conference.
- The negotiations broke down and he returned disappointed.

RESTARTING OF THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

- After returning to India, Mahatma Gandhi discovered that the government had begun a new cycle of repression.
- Ghaffar Khan and Jawaharlal Nehru were both in jail.
- The Congress had been declared illegal.
- A series of measures had been imposed to prevent meetings demonstrations and boycotts.
- Mahatma Gandhi relaunched the Civil Disobedience Movement but by 1934 it lost its momentum.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT AND DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

- People refused to cooperate with the government during the Non-Cooperation Movement. People broke the laws during the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- Muslims participated in large numbers in the Non-Cooperation Movement. Muslim participation was less in the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- No tax campaign was not there in Non-Cooperation Movement. People refused to pay taxes in Civil Disobedience Movement.

CAUSES FOR THE FAILURE OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

- The Civil Disobedience Movement was called off without the fulfilment of the demand of the rich peasant communities.
- When the movement was relaunched, many rich peasant communities decided to not join the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- The Congress was unwilling to support the “no rent” campaigns due to the fear of upsetting the rich peasants and landlords.
- The spread of militant activities, worries of prolonged business disruptions, growing influences of socialism amongst the young Congress members and the failure of the Round Table Conference led to the withdrawal of support to the movement by the business class.
- Industrial workers did not participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement except in Nagpur.

- The Dalits (untouchables) did not participate as the Congress sided with the conservative high-caste Hindus.
- Muslim organizations and communities also sparsely participated in the movement. The Muslims alienated from the movement due to the fear of the dominance of the Hindu majority.