

## **Gandhi's Influence in Punjab: From War Support to Civil Disobedience Movement**

**Narinder Pal**

National Law University, Shimla

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This research paper deals with the Punjab before and after the Rowlatt Satyagraha. How British government passed the Rowlatt bills, what were the major points discussed in these bills, how Punjabis reacted to these bills, how Punjabis helped Britishers in the World War-I on the call of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's initial acquaintances with the Punjabis. What were the situation in Punjab after the Rowlatt Satyagraha and how Punjabis followed the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi in this movement were discussed in detail in this research paper. Paper also discusses the Civil Disobedience Movement and how people of Punjab reacted after the 11 years of Jallianwala Massacre to Gandhi's call.

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Mahatma Gandhi came back to India in 1915 from South Africa. After a long Struggle of 20 years against racial discrimination. When he came back after a huge victory, he immediately became the hero and messiah for millions of Indians without any question. On advice of his political guru (Gopal Krishan Gokhale) he toured India and observed how Indians are divided and trying hard to fight against Britishers. So, Gandhi launched three major campaigns like Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad mill strike back to back, in which he got successful to some extent. Soon he took over reigns of congress in his hands as his personality was growing day by day. He also helped British in World War 1, by organising recruits from Indians village to their army. He was of the hope that British will give Indians Dominion status after war but British have something different in mind. They passed Rowlatt Act after war, which was attack on the hopes of Indians.

In the starting of 1919, the British passed Indian Criminal Law Amendment Bill and the Criminal Law Emergency Power Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council. Mahatma Gandhi interpreted these bills as:

**Gazette Bill No.1-** The object of this bill is to amend the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code so as to put effective curbs on activities dangerous to state.<sup>1</sup>

**Gazette Bill No. 2-** The object of the bill is to make provision that the ordinary criminal law should be supplemented and emergency powers should be exercisable by the Government for the purpose of dealing with dangerous situations.<sup>2</sup>

Initially arguments against the bills stimulated the leaders and political parties in India. the members of Legislative councils thought of launching a massive campaign against these bills. In the meanwhile, Mahatma Gandhi was trying to make Indians understand his technique of Satyagraha. Gandhi wrote in a letter to Madan Mohan Malviya, "Under the circumstances I at any rate hope that all the Indian members will leave the Select Committee or, if necessary, even the council, and launch a countrywide agitation. You and other members have said that if the Rowlatt Bills are passed a massive agitation would be launched the like of which has not been seen in India. Mr. Lowndes said that the Government were not afraid of the agitation that is going on. He is right. Even if you held a hundred thousand meetings all over India what difference would it make?"<sup>3</sup> Despite of much resentment by Council leaders, the bills got approved by cabinet and became law. B.R Nanda commented on Gandhi's reaction to these bills.

All the elected Indian leaders voted against the bill; nevertheless, it became law. The passage of the first Rowlatt Bill was an eye-opener to Gandhi. He had heard the debate in the Imperial Legislative Council and seen how the persuasive logic of Indian councillors had been wasted on the official benches. 'You can wake a man,' he wrote later, 'only if he is really asleep; no effort that you make will produce any effect upon him if he is merely pretending to sleep.' The conviction grew upon him that the 'Great Civil Service Corporation' and the British commercial community had made the Government of India impervious to popular feeling. A government which really cared for public opinion would not

have enacted a measure which had been opposed by every shade of Indian opinion. And a government which was hoping to introduce a substantial measure of constitutional reforms could hardly have provided a worse introduction to an instalment of self-government.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi wanted to initiate his Satyagraha program against bills which was quite successful in South Africa. But his idea was not encouraged by big leaders like Madan Mohan Malviya, Shankar Lal Banker, V.S Srinivasa Sastri and C. Vijayaraghavachariar. However, Gandhi was firm about his idea, so he shared it directly with people. Gandhi took Satyagraha pledge with Vallabhai Patel, Kesari Prasad Manilal, Chandulal Manilal and Anasuyabai Sarabhai on 24<sup>th</sup> February in Ahmedabad.<sup>5</sup> After taking Satyagraha pledge, Gandhi started campaigning into the masses of different places. Gandhi wrote, "After embarking upon the movement I began addressing meetings with Delhi. I passed then through Lucknow, Allahabad and Bombay to Madras. My experience of all these meetings shows that advent of satyagraha has already altered the spirit of those who attend the satyagraha meetings".<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi was supported by many big newspapers like The Bombay Chronicle and The Hindu through his links with their editors. Many opposed Gandhi, even big leaders like Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee, Sir, D. E Wacha, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri etc. issued a manifesto against his new approach. Gandhi ignored criticism and announced the date of his movement which was 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1919. Gandhi clarified his step to be purely pious. He stated, 'Satyagraha, as I have endeavoured to explain a several meetings, is essentially a religious movement. It is a process of purification and penance. It seeks to secure reforms or redress of grievances by self-suffering. I therefore venture to suggest that the second Sunday after the publication of the Viceregal assent to Bill No. 2 of 1919 (i.e., 6<sup>th</sup> April) may be observed as a day of humiliation and prayer. As there must be an effective public demonstration in keeping with the character of the observance, I beg to advise as follows.<sup>7</sup>

Gandhi even wanted those leaders to join his programme who were against him, but without any political agenda. He said, "Will you please tell Mrs. Besant, this movement is not a party movement, and those who belong to particular parties after joining the movement cease to be party me? She will find, as the movement progresses, that satyagrahis will endeavour to purge themselves of acrimony and other such delinquencies".<sup>8</sup>Gandhi got support of Swami Sharadha Nand in Northern Front. He also got support of Muslims but, they wanted to use his technique for release of their two leaders Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali. But Gandhi made it clear that this movement is not about arrest of brothers. The present movement is against Rowlatt Bills but this issue can be considered at later stage.

Finally, Rowlatt Bills were passed on 6th April, 1919. Gandhi with other satyagrahis responded with initiation ceremony followed by mourn at Back Bay foreshore, Bombay. Many big leaders like Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Horniman, Sarojini Naidu etc. joined satyagrahis to express the day of national disgrace. Gandhi also started weakly paper named satyagrahi which was unregistered with government on 7th April. In this paper, he focused on issues like Hindu-Muslim unity, Swadeshi, Civil-disobedience and Hindi Language. Gandhi was planning to go Delhi to personally evaluate the situation. Before he could reach Delhi, he was warned not to enter Delhi or Punjab. Being a satyagrahi, Mahatma disobeyed the order and was arrested and taken back to Bombay. Gandhi knew the consequences therefore he requested his companions to remain peaceful. In spite of Gandhi's request people became impatient at many places and crossed the confines of his sacred satyagraha. After his release Gandhi wanted to end this satyagraha temporarily which became visible from his speeches, correspondences and satyagrahi leaflet. Finally on 18th April, 1919, he suspended Satyagraha after three days of fasting. Gandhi knew his technique was misinterpreted by masses, government and leaders on which he wrote:

"I would like to assure you that I have acted with the greatest deliberation and with a due sense of responsibility. I had not the vaguest notion of the deep-seated and widespread anger against the Government. When I suggested the Sunday demonstration

and fast, I thought I would be laughed at by most people as a lunatic. But the idea struck the religious imagination of an angry people. They thought that deliverance lay through such demonstrative and penitential act. I was unprepared for this universal response as I was unprepared for the shooting (in my opinion, totally uncalled for) at Delhi and much more so for my arrest and deportation and various orders of exclusion and internment".<sup>9</sup>

Gandhi didn't expect so much of support from people initially. But after these incidents he understood that people interpreted his idea wrong. Therefore, he had to suspend satyagraha as people were not ready for next stage of civil-disobedience. Gandhi himself misinterpreted Indian masses and their grievances. According to Gandhi, civil disobedience part was taken wrong by masses, it was based only on principal of non-violence. Gandhi wrote, "I eliminated civil disobedience, not because it was unsuited to the masses, but because it was unsuited to the season, in other words, it was not in season to preach it".<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, the Government presented their anxiety by preventing the peaceful activities of the leaders and the satyagrahis which stimulated the masses in general. They with their scepticism shaped the peaceful satyagraha into a violent crusade. Thirdly, he was able to display his potential to influence the masses which was acknowledged by some of the astute political leaders in a following manner. Gandhi wrote, "It saddens me to see in your writings anew Mrs. Besant and not the old Mrs. Besant who in utter disregard of man-made laws, whether social or political, stood for Truth against the whole world. It is tragic to think that you should now turn back upon your own teachings and accuse me of "leading young men of good impulses to break their most solemn pledges". I cannot accept the charge, but I would certainly advice everyone to break all the pledges he might have taken I they are contrary to truth".<sup>11</sup>Gandhi wrote a letter to Lala Lajpat Rai in which he condemned the idea of violent revolution and discarded the plan for secret societies and secret propaganda. Gandhi considers terrorism as sinful and useless. For

India's freedom Gandhi don't want all these programs of cowards. He believed that no nation deserves or will win freedom which is not prepared to suffer for it.<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi was not ready to compromise his ideals of non-violence and peaceful satyagraha under any circumstances this became clear from his speeches and writings. In fact he was ready to wait for people to understand the force of non-violence. Gandhi wrote in *The Hindu*, "It is not without sorrow that I feel compelled to advise the temporary suspension of civil disobedience. I give this advice not because I have less faith now in its efficacy, but because I have, if possible, greater faith than before. It is my perception of the law of satyagraha which impels me to suggest the suspension. I am sorry, when I embarked upon a mass movement, I underrated the forces of evil and I must now pause and consider how best to meet the situation".<sup>13</sup> Gandhi was a man of progressive vision, so he wanted to shortlist those localities and areas where violent events took place to observe his shortcomings and better his technique of non-violent satyagraha. In Punjab, he himself wants to examine the efficiency of his technique. He was keen interested in Punjabi's response to Satyagraha.

#### **Gandhi's Initial Connections with Punjabis**

Mahatma Gandhi was familiar with the personality of Lala Lajpat Rai and his methods of working. Gandhi wrote about him, "Mr. Lajpat Rai, from the Punjab, is no less noble in mind. He is a recognised leader of the Punjab. He has been devoting his earnings and his energy to the promotion of the work of the Arya Samaj, which has been recently made familiar to our readers. Hardly had he finished the self-imposed work of relieving the distress in Kangra District, owing to the terrible earthquake, then, at the call of duty, he left for England".<sup>14</sup> He even asked people of South Africa to learn from self-sacrificing spirit of Lala Lajpat Rai.

"We believe that Lala Lajpat Rai, in exile, is on a picnic. For, his object has been achieved. It was against the Punjab Lands Act that he gave a battle, and not merely for his own pleasure. That law is wrecked; then, what does it matter to Lalaji, whether he

lives in Mandala or in Lahore? Many know how to be wise and discreet in speech, but people do not pay attention to all that they say. But the man who follows up his words with deeds, who abides by his promise, will be listened to by everyone, though his words may of a mad man. For this reason, we give below the substance of a speech by Lala Lajpat Rai. There are no particularly new thoughts in it, yet they are the thoughts of a patriot suffering exile".<sup>15</sup>

Prof. Parmanand met Gandhi in 1905, he was a missionary of Arya Samaj. Gandhi appreciated his zeal for propagation of Arya Samaj and therefore welcomed his stay as well his religious lectures. 'Professor Parmanand the distinguished scholar from the Anglo-Vedic College, has been in our midst now for a few weeks. He has delivered interesting discourses to crowded audiences. His mission seems to be to advance the teachings of the Arya Samaj, which is a body that has done most useful and practical work, apart from its religious doctrine. It has produced earnest patriots, a band of self-sacrificing teachers, and it has also done noble work in connection with the terrible earthquake that took place in India few months back. The Professor who belongs to such a body of workers has a right to expect a warm welcome from Indians in South Africa. Indeed, we cannot have in our midst too many Indians of attainment and culture". Swami Shraddhanand was introduced to Gandhi by C.F Andrews. Gandhi wrote about Swami, "Mr. Andrews has familiarized your name and your work to me. I feel I am writing to no stranger. I hope therefore that you will pardon me for addressing you by the title which both Mr. Andrews and I have used in discussing you and your work. Mr. Andrews told me also how you, Gurudev and Mr. Rudra had influenced him". Swami took good care of Gandhi's boys when he was busy in finding place for his ashram. Gandhi also made personal visit to Swami Shraddhanand at Hardwar. "The speech, it may be observed, was delivered in Hindi. After thanking Mahatmaji Munshi Ram for his great kindness to my boys to whom he gave shelter on two occasions and acted as father to them and after stating that the time for action had arrived rather than for speeches, I proceeded".

Gandhi was also familiar with Chaudhari Rambhuj Dutt and Sarladevi Choudhrani. Gandhi wrote, "I first met Sarladevi in 1901. She comes from the famous Tagore family. Of her learning and sincerity, too, I get evidence in ever so many ways".<sup>16</sup> Their understanding helped them to work together in Punjab. Gandhi further wrote, "In the Punjab, I found Sarladevi. I first came to know her in 1910 and then I saw the husband and wife again in Hardwar. Sarladevi invited me to the Punjab. I accepted the invitation but felt nervous. At that time, she extended it, she was separated from her husband. That made me wonder whether it would be proper for me to accept her hospitality. However, I look upon it as my good fortune if I can share other's suffering and so I stayed with her in the Punjab. I had from her as much service as from one's own sister and thus became her debtor".<sup>17</sup>

#### **Punjab in Rowlatt Satyagraha**

Gandhi after coming back to India, toured whole nation but he could not visit Punjab. Although he wanted to meet Dr. Satyapal, but circumstances did not let this happen. He got arrested at Palwal and sent back to Bombay. But Gandhi didn't lose hope, he sent message to Punjabis through Swami Shradhanand to be tolerant. Gandhi shared short report in satyagrahi: II, after his release. He commented, "Serious disturbances have occurred at Lahore and Amritsar owing to the deportation of Drs. Kitchlew and Satyapal".

'In the capital itself an active opposition to the Rowlatt Bills had started very early after their publication in the Gazette of India on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 1919. The Bills were referred to a Select Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, but on the 4<sup>th</sup> February a meeting in the Bradlaugh Hall had already been held under the auspices of the local "Indian Association," of which the Secretary was Mr. Duni Chand. On the 1<sup>st</sup> March Mr. Gandhi had issued to the press the terms of the *Satyagraha* vow and inaugurated his campaign of "civil disobedience to laws." On the 9<sup>th</sup> March another protest meeting was held at the Bradlaugh Hall and addressed by Dr. Kitchlew of Amritsar and other including persons including Pandit Rambhuj of Lahore. It was presided over by the Honourable Mr. Fazl-i-Husain gave evidence before us to the effect that

the passive resistance principle did not find favour with the great majority of the educated classes in Lahore and that no one in Lahore to the best of his belief ever took the *Satyagraha* vow. We think that these statements represent the facts with substantial accuracy, but by the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, when neither Bill had yet been passed, the "civil disobedience" notion was new; people were coquetting with it nor holding it *in terrorem* over the head of the authorities, though not resolved to adopt or censure it. The resolution passed at this meeting was drawn, as Mr. Fazl-i-Husain tells us, "With the object of not taking Gandhi's vow of passive resistance." Its terms were "that in the event of these Bills being passed into law, in spite of the unanimous opposition afforded by communities of all shades of opinion, the Indian public will be justified in having resort to such forms of passive resistance as they can eventually decide upon." One excited speaker was stopped by the chairman as he was declaring that they should adopt such means that all Lahore should be converted into a jail. Dr. Kitchlew declared that he would follow Mr. Gandhi; others like the chairman were more cautious or more critical. The chairman asked how Indians were to oppose this law, adding that the matter was not an easy one, that it was quite easy for one to say that he would not submit to it, but it should be decided after mature thought'.<sup>18</sup> The Times of India detects the passiveness of leaders and specifies the spirit of few great leaders to educate Punjabis for the efficacy of Satyagraha technique.

"Mr. Shafi and the "rais" class generally are no doubt prominent, professionally or socially, and a number of the mare, of course, members of the Legislative Council. It does not, however, follow that they are persons of influence in Lahore. On the contrary, there is ample evidence of a convincing kind that the people of the city regard them as time-servers and title-hunters and dislike them accordingly. It is clear too, that other politicians look upon them as men who can led, though they cannot lead. Thus, in his speech of the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, as reported in the *Tribune* of the 7<sup>th</sup>, in a passage, which provoked loud and prolonged applause, Gokal Chand did not hesitate to tell even Mr. Shafi and Sir Zulfikar Ali Khan that if they

supported the Rowlatt Bills they would be regarded as enemies of their country and India would know the reason why".<sup>19</sup>

*The Civil and Military Gazette* also informs about reactions of masses to Gandhi's call for Satyagraha. 'The agitation has followed a double line of action, namely, direct criticism of the Act by means of public speeches and publications and the initiation of the threatened movement of passive resistance. The latter movement was ushered in by a demonstration consisting of the observance of a day of fasting and the closing of shops and places of business such a demonstration was not in itself illegal; but there is ample evidence to prove that in more than one place those locally responsible for its organization overstepped the limits of lawful persuasion and resorted to direct interference with the business of many who were not interested in the movement, and to forcible obstruction of the traffic in the public streets'.<sup>20</sup> These events shows how satyagraha technique was shaped by the various interest groups. 'The Committee then describe the events of the 11<sup>th</sup>, the inflammatory speeches delivered at the Badshahi mosque to excited crowds of Hindus and Muhammadans, the organization of the *Danda Fauj*, a band of hooligans, who marched through the city armed with sticks (lathis) and destroyed pictures of Their Majesties, shouting that King George was dead...Special attention is invited by the Committee to the use of inflammatory and seditious posters in Lahore, which in the name of Mahatma Gandhi called upon the brave people of the Punjab to enlist in the *Danda Fauj* and kill the English who were described as pigs, monkeys and Kafirs'.<sup>21</sup> In Last all these reactions took the shape of Massacre with the O' Dwyer's line of action. B.R. Nanda wrote, "The city was quiet for the next two days, but on April 13<sup>th</sup>, the day of the *Baisakhi* festival, a meeting was held in Jallianwala Bagh, which became the scene of a holocaust. Dyer decided to break up the meeting. The entrance was too narrow to admit the armoured cars, but the marched into the garden with his troops, who fired 1,650 rounds in ten minutes. The holiday crowd of unarmed men, women and children unable to escape from the walled compound, were caught 'like rats in traps. The Punjab

Government estimated the number of killed at 379. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, a member of the Hunter Committee estimated that 400 persons had been killed and 12,000 injured. Later, Dyer explained that his object was to create a 'moral effect' by resolute action. He could not have dealt a bigger blow to the empire which he was professing to save".<sup>22</sup> Nanda also points out certain reasons for varied reactions to Gandhi's call for Satyagraha. "Meanwhile, events in the Punjab had moved to a tragic climax. The Punjab had been suffering from several undercurrents of discontent. It had provided nearly half a million recruits for the World War I; it suffered from the after-effects of the influenza epidemic which had claimed a heavy toll; it suffered, like the rest of India, from a high cost of living and its predominantly Muslim population had been disturbed by ideas of Pan-Islamism".<sup>23</sup>

Whereas Kumar underlines certain factors responsible for resentment of public against government in Lahore before the Satyagraha. 'If O' Dwyer, the Arya Samaj, and the crisis of 1913 explain the behaviour of the Hindus in 1919, they throw light on the motivations of the Muslim artisans and workers, whose participation in the events of April transformed the Rowla<sup>9</sup> Satyagraha into a truly mass movement. The response of the Muslim of Lahore to the call for action in 1919 was influenced by considerations which had very little to do directly with Gandhi or with Rowlatt Act. But whatever the reasons which compelled the Muslims to demonstrate with the Hindus on the streets of Lahore, by doing so they created a striking impression of Hindu-Muslim unity against the British Government. The Muslims of Lahore were in fact far more agitated than the Hindus in the spring of 1919. They were more agitated than the latter because of the political values disseminated by poets like Iqbal, and also because of the propaganda conducted by demagogues like Zafar Ali. The Muslims had come to believe that the British Government was an inveterate enemy of Islam, both within and without India. The effect of such propaganda was heightened by the economic condition of the Muslims masses, since they suffered grievously under the inflammatory conditions of 1919. All that was required in April 1919 to launch a popular movement against the British Government was an issue which would provide a channel of expression

for the discontents which affected various classes and communities in Lahore. By initiating a satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act, Gandhi provided such an issue, and he thereby set afoot a movement whose intensity surprised the local administration no less than it surprised the local leaders of Lahore'.<sup>24</sup> Brown records the response of masses in a manner, "In the Punjab there were no known signatures to the vow, people were mostly interested in local and economic problems, and only in the larger towns like Lahore and Amritsar was there any feeling about the bills".<sup>25</sup>

### **Gandhi and Punjab after Rowlatt Satyagraha**

Gandhi was not present in Punjab before and after Rowlatt Satyagraha. He remained silent on the events occurred in Punjab for month. Gandhi made no public statement or declaration regarding the mis-happenings of Punjab because he had no reliable data to enable me to form an opinion. Gandhi was not prepared to martial law, as such; he was unwilling to do anything calculated needlessly to irritate local authority, lastly, he was not prepared to infer from sir Michael O' Dwyer's reported severe administration during peace period that martial law measures would be unduly hard.

He asked editor of Tribune to write about the cases of injustice done by government under martial law. Gandhi said, "I am still hoping that very soon there would be the fullest investigation made as to the causes of disturbances and the measures adopted to quell them". He even contemplated to resume Satyagraha against the wrongs done to Punjab, but swami Shradhanand withdrew his support from his movement. The reasons for this drift were not known. They both did their work in individual capacity. Gandhi wrote for the injustice and his experiences throughout the Satyagraha in Young India. He was approached by many relatives of the victims of martial law; he even put some cases to the Viceroy for re-investigation. Gandhi shared the cases of Babu Kalinath, Lala Radha Krishan's, Jagannath's case, Dr. Kitchlew's trial, Lahore judgement, Karamchand, Gujrat Mal case, Dr. Satyapal's case, Amritsar's appeals etc. in Young India. Among them were the leaders and common masses who despite obeying government orders were held political

convicts. Gandhi said, "One thing stands as our duty. Whatever the nature and strength of the committees appointed by the government, what can they do if we are not able to lead proper evidence before them? If persons like Lala Harkrishan Lal remain in prison, how can they come out with the facts? All those persons who are being held, not for any actual crimes but principally as political prisoners, should be released. There can be a proper inquiry on the Punjab incidents only if this is done".

Hunter Committee was appointed by government in October, 1919 to enquire the April disturbances in Bombay, Punjab and Delhi. But congress rejected this committee as they doubted the sincerity of Britishers. The leaders like Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malviya, Swami Shradhanand started working by themselves. They started making inquiries and collecting evidences by their own. Gandhi also requested to private Secretary of Viceroy to allow him to visit Punjab, as he wants to analyse the whole situation according to him and want to collect facts and evidences for his better understanding of situation. Gandhi visited Lahore on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1919, with official permission, he stayed at the house of Pandit Rambhuj Dutt.<sup>26</sup> Gandhi visited the places where martial law was implemented like Lahore, Amritsar, Gujranwala, Kasur, Wazirabad, Golden Temple, Jallianwala Bagh, Nizamabad, Chuharkana, Akalgarh, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Ramnagar and lastly to Lyallpur. The congress made report on Punjab disorders and Gandhi was given the task of drafting it. The report said affairs in Punjab were already disturbed before Gandhi's call for Satyagraha.

Firstly, Michael O' Dwyer's estrangement with different classes of Punjab and his oppressive policies became the main reason. Secondly, it indicates the way O' Dwyer gradually gagged the Press and secluded Punjab from the national activities. Thirdly it gives an idea of O' Dwyer's indifferent approach towards the public opinion as well as the leaders apprehensions but in spite of that some local leaders tried their best to control the populace. Fourthly, it also indicates the influence of local leaders of Amritsar who were able to infuse the spirit for observance of hartal among the masses and consequently their deportation incensed not only the people of Amritsar but also the people of the adjoining districts. Fifthly there port highlights the brutality by exposing the

'Dwyerism' through the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. It indicates it to be a calculated piece of inhumanity towards the entirely innocent and unarmed men including children. There port termed the act of Dwyerism to be unparalleled for its ferocity in the history of Modem British administration.

### **Civil Disobedience Movement and Punjab**

Gandhi wrote a long letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, on 2nd March 1930, communicating his decision. After enumerating evils done by the British Government more or less on the lines indicated by his 'Eleven Points', he announced that if his letter made no appeal to the Viceroy's heart to the extent of removing the evils of British rule enumerated by him, he would proceed with his followers to disregard the salt laws on the eleventh day of March. He also asked for an interview, but Lord Irwin refused to see Mahatma Gandhi and regretted that he should have 'contemplating a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace'. The die was cast and there was no retreat.<sup>27</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi started his march to Dandi from Sabarmati Ashram on 12 March, 1930 with 78 delegates and reached Dandi on 6<sup>th</sup> April after 24 days. Media covered Gandhi's historic march and thousands of people joined him on his 385 kms march. On 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1930, Gandhi broke Salt law by making salt from sea. Gandhi got arrested for his action but he has already issued advisory to his followers and countrymen what to do in this situation. People all over India started breaking laws and making salt from sea, refused to pay taxes, peacefully picketing shops, promoting Swadeshi etc. Local leaders took the charge at different places.

The Congress leaders in Punjab joined Civil disobedience on the call of Mahatma Gandhi. The General Secretary of Provincial Congress, Dr. Satyapal made an appeal to the people to enrol themselves as member of the Congress. The provincial unit of the All India Hindustan Seva Dal was inaugurated to enrol members and train them for national service. The Congress choose Gujranwala to hold a satyagraha. Volunteers were asked to march to Gujranwala by April 6<sup>th</sup>, when Gandhiji was scheduled to break the salt law at Dandi. The programme evoked good

response. The conference was attended by about six thousand delegates. The Punjab government, nevertheless, contended that the Congress received a setback at Gujranwala Conference. It was decided in conference to start Civil Disobedience Movement in the province on April 13th by breaking the Salt law. A war council was also setup to organize the work of civil disobedience in the province. On April 11th the salt law was broken first at Lahore. A procession headed by Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Muhammad Alam went through the city and across the Ravi bridge where some process of making salt out of saline earth was gone through. It was manufactured at the Jallianwala Bagh under the leadership of Dr. Kitchlew and Chaudhari Afzal Haq. Similar attempts were made at several places in the province.<sup>28</sup>

The miscellany of HSRA once again became active in Punjab. About 26 incidents were reported in 1930. Even more alarming perhaps from the British point of view was the popular upsurge in Peshawar, capital of the traditionally sensitive border area of North-West Frontier Province. Abdul Gaffar Khan, son of a prosperous village chief of Utmanzai near Peshawar had started educational and social reform work among his Pathan countrymen from 1912, deriving inspiration successively from the Deoband Muslim nationalist group, the Khilafat Movement and the modernistic reforms of Amir Amanallah (the Afghan King whose progressive and pro-soviet policies led to his overthrow in 1928). Badshah Khan as he was coming to be known by the mid-1920s started the first Pushto political monthly *Pakhtun* in May 1928 and organized in the next year a volunteer brigade *Khudai Khidmatgar* which wore red shirts because they got less soiled on village tours. Abdul Ghaffar Khan had become a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi by 1929. The creed of non-violence helped to mitigate the traditional blood-feuds among Pathans and as elsewhere served as a check on internal social tensions (for the *Khudai Khidmatgar* included small and middling landlords, tenant farmers, as well as poor peasants and agricultural labourers). After the Lahore Congress which Gaffar Khan attended with a large contingent of Pathans, membership of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* shot up from 500 to 50,000 in six months and a government communique on 5th May 1930 also alleged a certain amount of communistic activity in the villages around Peshawar by a local branch of the *Naujawan Bharat*

Sabha. The arrest of Badshah Khan and a number of other leaders on 23rd April led to a massive upsurge in Peshawar with crowds confronting around cars and defying intensive firing for three hours at Kissakhani Bazar.

The Punjab Congress now decided to send regular batches of volunteers to Peshawar from different parts of the Punjab. In pursuance of the resolution passed by the Punjab War Council, Master Tara Singh also led an Akali Jatha from Amritsar on May 10th, 1930. It was followed by more shahidi jathas. But most of the volunteers were arrested before they could reach the boundaries of the North-West Frontier Province. There were hartals, processions and meetings in various towns of the province to protest against it.<sup>29</sup>

The Sikhs participation in Civil Disobedience Movement was in large numbers. According to Master Tara Singh 7000 people were convicted from Punjab out of which 3000 were Sikhs. Duni Chand, a congress leader claims that Sikhs has sent proportionally the largest number to jail. De Montgomery, Governor of Punjab wrote the news of the firing at the Sisganj Gurdwara at Delhi by the police gave a new turn to the Civil Disobedience Movement among the Sikhs. He further adds 'The repercussion of this fixing at the Sisganj Gurdwara at Delhi on the Sikhs had been very unfortunate. I am afraid it has brought in lot of extremist Sikhs agitating for the independence cause. We shall now have to deal with the whole extreme wing.' According to K. L. Tuteja, however, the Sikh participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was limited as well as cautions. The loyalist Sikhs formed new bodies like Aman Sabha and Sikh Sudhar Committees to hamper the spread of Civil Disobedience Movement in the Sikh community. Another straw came over the question of flag which was used by Baba Kharak Singh and his allies to prevent the Sikhs from joining the Gandhian Movement. Even the Sisganj firing which once blazed the sky, failed to generate the fire of opposition in the Sikh community against the government and gradually lost force. Another answer to why Sikhs did not join in large numbers in the Civil Disobedience Movement can be sought in their continued obsession with the question of communal representation. The minority psychosis of Sikhs impelled them to think more in terms of

adequate representation than the bigger issues like Civil Disobedience Movement.

After the arrest of Gandhi, no tax campaign was also started in different parts of country.<sup>30</sup> People of Punjab also tried this in Sheikhpura but after the arrest of leaders movement died. Similarly, at Jandiala Guru, lorry drivers and ekkawalas refused to pay municipal tax. But, as conceded by the Punjab Congress leadership no serious effort was made in the province to start no tax-campaign. A meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee was held in Lahore on August 25th, 1930 to implement decision of All India Congress to boycott councils. The congress workers went to each candidate to withdraw his candidature. The Punjabi legislators were reluctant to boycott the legislatures. Only two members of the Punjab Council, Chaudhari Afzal Haq and Bodh Raj resigned. It may be added that among the Provincial Councils, Bengal led with 34 resignations followed by Bihar and Orissa with 31 each. Picketing of the polling booths was also decided upon by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. A joint meeting of the Central Sikh League and the Shiromani Akali Dal was held at Lahore. It resolved to boycott the forthcoming elections in obedience to the Congress mandate.<sup>31</sup>

Government initially was not taking any bold steps to stop these activities as they thought movement will die down eventually. But by the end of May they started arresting satyagrahis. This intensified the struggle and more people were arrested in response. The response was massive. In the first four months, over 80,000 satyagrahis most of them urban and rural poor were jailed while lakh took to the picketing of shops selling liquor and foreign cloth. Illegal gatherings, non-violent demonstration, celebrations of various national days and other forms of defiance of the ordinances were the rule of the day.

In Amritsar, the arrest of first band of satyagrahis and internal factions of congress made movement slow. Picketing, however was ultimately started on 28th January, 1932 in the Gokal Cloth Market, Krishna Cloth Market and Katra Ahluwalia. Like Lahore, in Amritsar too students and ladies took part in picketing and boycott activities. As mentioned earlier, as a result of the decision of the Shrimani Akali Dal

on 24th February 1932, and the settlement of the Daska dispute between the Hindus and the Sikhs gave an impetus to the movement and it made local authorities uneasy as it diverted Akali volunteers from the 'Daska' morcha to the Civil Disobedience Movement. Picketing in Sheikhpura resulted in cloth merchants unanimously deciding to stop all trade in foreign cloth. At Gujranwala, the cloth merchants agreed to stop the sale of foreign cloth from 7th February, 1932. Side by side with the boycott of foreign cloth, efforts were made to popularize Swadeshi also. At Lahore, Punjab Swadeshi League was formed with Lala Kanshi Ram Vaid as president and Lala Gobind Ram Khanna as General Secretary. Lala Gobind Rama Khanna toured the various districts and branches of the League were established at Amritsar, Ferozepur, Ambala, Okara and Motgomery. Swadeshi Parcharani Sabhas were formed at Lahore and Amritsar with the object of doing swadeshi propaganda work. A Buy India League was formed at Okara to propagate the cult of swadeshi with Mr. Vidya Sagar as President and Lala Bhagmal Sehgal as Secretary. At Ferozepur in January 1932, batches of volunteers used to parade through the city bazars and lanes every evening urging the people to use khaddar and swadeshi articles. The National Volunteers Corps and organized processions at Amritsar to preach the use of khaddar and other Indian made articles. At Lahore, students union decided to celebrate the swadeshi week from 12th May to 18th May 1932.

In the meantime Gandhi Signed Pact with Lord Irwin popularly known as Gandhi Irwin Pact of 1931. Gandhi accepted the demands of Government and Government accepted his. Congress boycotted the First Round Table conference but Gandhi went to London for Second Round Table Conference. After coming back he again tried to revive civil disobedience movement but could not revived as the Unionist leaders Fazl-i-Hussian and in the South-East Punjab for instance, Chhotu Ram carried anti Congress propaganda in the countryside warning that non-payment of land revenue would provide opportunity to the Government to confiscate their lands.<sup>32</sup>

In Punjab, the Congress efforts at that time to expand its social base by enrolling new members failed to produce favourable results. It carried the mass struggle as decided by the AICC, after constituting a

War Council which included representatives from different sections of society. The movement was strong in Lahore, Amritsar and some other towns of Central Punjab but it was weak in Multan and Rawalpindi of the North-West Region. The civil disobedience programme also did not attract the attention of the Punjabi legislature to the same extent. Only two members from the Punjab Council, Bodh Raj and Chaudhri Afzal had resigned in comparison to Bengal where there were 34 resignations. On the whole, we can still say that despite the Unionist Party's support to the British, a sizeable section of all the three communities- Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were pitted against the British during the period in the movement of Civil Disobedience.

### **Conclusion**

Gandhi came to India after becoming hero in South Africa's successful Satyagraha. He toured India for better understanding and met national leaders to get connected with the people on ground. The main problem in this connection was language, but this was not the case in Punjab. But Gandhi was banned to enter Punjab so his idea of Satyagraha could not reach to Punjabis. Second major issue was press censorship even his writings could not reach people. Thirdly people did not understand Gandhi's Satyagraha as it was new for Indians, even the leaders were not able to grasp the core of idea. Fourthly, Gandhi after investigating the whole truth and seeing the zeal of Punjabis during Jallianwala Bagh Massacre he acknowledged his fallacy for the Punjabis as he was doubted for the positive response of the Punjabis for the non-violence ideal. In civil Disobedience Movement people again lost his faith in Mahatma Gandhi after his pact with Lord Irwin. He went to England for Second round table conference and after coming back to India he revived the movement but it could not gained earlier response. We cannot say this was a failure movement as a whole because people learn the Gandhian way of working which became their Guru Mantra in Non-Cooperation movement.

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