

INDIVIDUAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT IN COLONIAL PUNJAB (1940-1941)

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Abstract: This empirical paper focuses on crucial aspect of Indian freedom struggle between 1940-1941 and it has been observed that the British were not even ready to announce even slightest constitutional concession during 2nd world war when they were in dire need of India's voluntarily participation in promoting the cause of imperial war machine. It also reflects on Punjab's less contribution in this struggle as compared with other parts of India. The author has exhausted original sources to make it research oriented at National Archives of India, New Delhi. Home Department , Government of India Files, Private papers of the then Viceroy, Governor, Secretary of State for India , Fortnightly reports , Mahatma Gandhi along with a large number of scholarly books have been consulted to have a fair view of the theme under discussion.

Keywords: British East India Company, Individual Civil Disobedience, Satyagraha campaign, Political and constitutional stalemate, Indian National Congress, Britain's war effort, Phases of the movement, Colonial view

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Introduction: Individual civil disobedience was waged by Indian National Congress under the steward leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in 1940 to lodge a moral protest against the stubborn attitude of the British for its failure to recognize the legitimate demands of Indian people in regard to their independence. The movement soon became a matter of concern for the British and repressive measures of the Government failed to dispirit patriotic Indians. At one time about 25000 satyagrahis were put behind bars. Punjab's contribution in this satyagraha was less as compared with magnificent contribution by the other British Indian Province and it was due to the different polity of the province.

Objective of Study: The main motive of the study is to see that how the colonial government in British India having imperialist gut feeling was not ready to recognize licit demands of Indians and want to promote the imperial war cause in India selfishly and it was also to discern that how Congress responded to meet this challenge by launching a campaign though not throttling the British war rhythm along with a glance upon Punjab's lukewarm contribution.

Material and Methodology: Contemporary Government of India Home Department's Fortnightly Reports, Private papers of Viceroy, constitutional documents and contemporary periodicals available at National Archives of India, New Delhi, were utilized to prepare this research oriented monograph. Historical research methodology has been practiced in order to give the theme an objective look. Primary and secondary sources have been exhausted to have a fair and comprehensive picture of the subject.

Discussion: British East India Company (formation 1600 AD) was brought into being for commercial activities to deal with India and other eastern countries and the sole colonial purpose was to mint money and drain it out from India. However when circumstances permitted it, it became a political force and struggled to acquire political power under Robert Clive, Warren Hastings, Lord Wellesley and Lord Dalhousie. They wielded their licit and illicit means to extend their political sway over India. After being shaken during the great revolt of 1857, the company rule over India was put to an end and direct British rule was established turning it into another official British colony. Punjab became the causality of Lord Dalhousie's imperial lust in 1849. Earlier Governor- General was heading the Indian administration and now was added to it

imperial rank and title of Viceroy signifying the representation of the colonial British Government through the Secretary of State for India. The imperial rulers in India fully exploited Indian economic and political interests enormously and made India the poorest in their rule of two hundred years. The British Government in India pursued economic policies which expanded the area of growth of such raw materials in India as needed by the British industries as a result of Industrial revolution in Britain which further effected in specialization of agriculture in India¹. Big amount was drained out from India to Britain in one form or the other. One estimate stated that from 1758 to 1765 AD about 60 lacs pounds of amount were drained out from India to Britain and Indians were treated very shabbily by the British in India. Ellenborough, Governor General of India plainly stated in 1840 AD that Britain expected from India Rs.20 to 30 lacs of amount to be drained out of her every year. This annual drain of wealth to which Dada Bhai Naoroji , the grand old man of India, and Ramesh Chander Dutt , an economic historian, termed as tribute which British Government used to take from Indian Government, caused poverty and scarcity in India culminating in engendering bitterness among the Indians against the colonial government. FH Robinson who had been on a very august post in East India Company from 1824-1852, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in June 1853 attributed the growing disaffection in India to “ the increased despotism of officials, their disregard for Indian feelings ... and their dislike of Indians as Indians and as heathens”.² As a result of British exploitation, discontent manifested among different segments of society culminating in the shape of Indian National Movement reflecting anti imperialistic struggle. Mahatma Gandhi after returning from South Africa in 1914 waged various movements against the autocratic imperial rule to make India free from the British clutches coupled with an idea to improve the condition of the natives. Champaran (Bihar) tenants satyagraha against the English indigo planters in April 1917, participation in Labour agitation against the owners of cotton textile mills , Kheda cultivators satyagraha in the Kaira district of Gujarat , a workers strike in Ahmedabad in 1918, Rowlatt Act satyagraha ,non-violent noncooperation movement (1920-1921) and Civil Disobedience movement also known as Dandi march (1930-1934) had been well-known movements of Gandhi against the British exploiters. The great mobilization that he could bring made him unquestionably the leading figure of the nationalist movement by 1940. Next fight back was Individual Civil Disobedience of 1940 whose main purpose was to jolt the colonial

masters morally but in this struggle the role of Punjab as compared to other British Indian provinces was not spectacular.

The outbreak of Second World War on 3rd September 1939 brought India into its vortex with the declaration of the Viceroy 'India to be a belligerent country'. The situation was radically changed and the empire needed the help of the Rulers and British India in men, money and material to promote the cause of the Empire's war effort. The imperial masters therefore adopted the policy of constitutional conciliation towards Indian political parties. Congress Working Committee on 15th September 1939 invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what were their war aims and how those aims would apply to India after the termination of war³. Muslim League Working Committee on 18th September demanded from the British Government an assurance that no declaration regarding the question of constitution advance for India be made without the consent and approval of the Muslim League. In fact both these leading political parties were for conditional cooperation.⁴ The Viceroy was not ready to commit post-war constitutional status which he could not fulfill later on. Political and constitutional stalemate emerged. He badly needed the support of different segments of society to promote the cause of imperial war effort which was his first priority than the post war constitutional status of India. He was therefore to untie the political and constitutional knot. The Viceroy was still in the process of interviewing the fifty- two Indian political leaders when CR Attlee, leader of the opposition in the House of Commons, followed by Archie Sinclair and Lloyd George in a debate in the British Parliament attacked his policy in India. Attlee criticized the Viceroy as being out of touch with realities and lacking imaginative insight. Marquess of Zetland, the Secretary of State for India however, commented: "Attlee was entirely mistaken."⁵ The Viceroy with the approval of His Majesty's Government made a declaration on 17th October describing Britain's war aims, Dominion Status as objective, full weight to the views and interests of the minorities in any future settlement of India etc.⁶ Gandhi characterized it as 'profoundly disappointing' and said that it would have been better if the British Government had declined to make any declaration whatsoever.⁷ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit JLNehru and C Rajagopalchari also read the Viceroy's statement with regret terming it 'deeply disappointing'.⁸ As a matter of protest, Congress ministries in British Indian Provinces resigned by November 1939. Political and constitutional standoff persisted. Muslim League, however, found in the Viceroy's declaration

Government' recognition of the fact that Muslim League represented the interests of the Muslims and minorities and sought further clarifications.⁹ Congress Working Committee on 1st March 1940 at Patna and at the annual Ramgarh session of Congress on 19th and 20th March, 1940 therefore demanded “ nothing short of Complete independence” and “ Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage” to prepare the constitution of India. .¹⁰ Muslim attitude was resultantly hardened as a result of Ramgarh resolution of Congress. At its annual session of Lahore, Muslim League on 24th March 1940 demanded in plain terms the partition of India having “geographically continuous (Muslim) unitsbe grouped into independent states...”along with territorially adjustments where necessary. Visualized Sovereign Muslim State would be known as Pakistan¹¹. Jawaharlal Nehru commented that Muslim League resolution made the negotiation with it impossible.¹² The Viceroy was disposed to regard Jinnah's partition plan as very largely in the nature of bargaining. Congress also started the preparation of Satyagraha Campaign (Civil Disobedience). Gandhi in his instruction on 25th March 1940 from Sevagram , Wardha urged:”Every Congress Committee should become a satyagraha committee and register such Congressmen who believe in the cultivation of the spirit of goodwill towards all.....” The Working Committee of Indian National Congress at Wardha from 15th April to 19th April 1940 gave full consideration to the situation in the country as it had developed since the Ramgarh Congress and to the necessity for preparing the Congress organization for Satyagraha which (the Ramgarh Congress declared) was inevitable in the future. The Committee welcomed the steps taken by the Provincial Congress Committee, in pursuance of the directions issued by Gandhi to function as Satyagraha Committees and to enroll the active and passive Satyagrahis.¹³ Ultimately, at the Ramgarh Congress in May 1940, he agreed to launch civil disobedience ; but this would be individual satyagraha by volunteers personally selected by Gandhi for this purpose, and they would only offer anti-war speeches.¹⁴ Linlithgow still doubted very much if Mahatma Gandhi wanted to get into civil disobedience early or if Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress were really prepared for it and his presumption was that Gandhi was more concerned to try to frighten His Majesty's Government.¹⁵ The Viceroy then ordered that plans must be ready by 15th May 1940 to deal firmly and quickly with any outbreak of civil disobedience. He knew that Gandhi had taken steps, immediately after the Congress session at Ramgarh , to organize a body pledged to it. ¹⁶Present regrettable political and constitutional deadlock in India could impede Empire's war effort. Therefore the Viceroy was

concerned to announce constitutional concessions to untie the vexed political knot of India. He could not meet the demands of Congress and Muslim League in its entirety. The Viceroy saw Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of Muslim League on 27th June 1940 and had found him anxious above all things to get into the administration.¹⁷ The Viceroy saw Gandhi on 29th June 1940 and found him completely intransigent and not prepared in any way to modify the full Congress demand for a declaration of freedom etc.¹⁸ Hindu Mahasabha was quite content with Dominion Status. The Viceroy and the Secretary of State were now set for a further declaration of the aims and intention of His Majesty's Government at the earliest to promote the cause of Empire's war effort. The Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty's Government made the announcement (of Winston's drafted declaration) on 8th August which came to be known as "August Offer". It recommended a certain number of representative Indians to join Governor-General's Executive Council, a War Advisory Council having the representation of Indian States and British India, , full weight to the views of minorities in any constitutional revision and fundamental constitutional issues to be decided after the termination of war.¹⁹

Abul Kalam Azad , President of Indian National Congress declined the invitation of the Viceroy for further discussion stating that he did not find any meeting ground for Congress in the terms of the Declaration of 8th August. Gandhi cabled his reaction to the Viceroy saying: "..... I cannot help feeling that a profound mistake has been made".²⁰ In Muslim circles, satisfaction was expressed on August Offer with guarantee given to minorities and claim was made that statement entirely justified Jinnah's policy. Jinnah later on demanded further concession and clarifications which were not conceded. As a result Muslim League was also annoyed with the declaration. Col. LS Amery, Secretary of State for India, felt Jinnah as eaten up with vanity and only prepared to cooperate if he felt that he was to be the shadow behind the thrown in future.²¹

Congress condemned the Viceroy statement in the form of declaration. The question arose as to what Congress should do in the present context. As a political organization it could not just sit quiet while tremendous events were happening throughout the world. Gandhi at first was opposed to any movement as it could be only on the issue of Indian Independence. Gandhi then thought of a limited civil disobedience. Wishing to prod an Empire at war without provoking it, Gandhi and Indian National Congress came up with the idea of a low intensity civil disobedience stir. He proposed that men and women should protest individually against dragging India into the

war. They would disassociate themselves from the war effort publically and court arrest. Maulana Azad suggested that there should be more extensive and active anti-war movement but to this Gandhi did not agree.²² Master Tara Singh ,an Akali leader of Punjab, in a letter to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and to Mahatma Gandhi wrote: “It is my considered opinion that even if the Congress is compelled to have recourse to civil obedience, to exert moral pressure on the government it should do nothing to prevent recruitment to the army but confine its activities to spheres which do not infringe the morale of our troops or dissipate our powers of defense..... I cannot be party to anything which is likely to weaken the position of my community....”²³ Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Master Tara Singh on 16th August in a rejoinder to a letter in which Tara Singh had argued that Congress should not prevent recruitment to the army : “ I have told you, in my opinion, you have nothing in common with the Congress nor the Congress with you....You have to be either fully nationalist or frankly communal and therefore dependent upon the British or other foreign power”.²⁴ Before the official meeting to be held at Wardha in October 1940 to discuss Gandhi’s plan of direct action, some top leaders including Nehru went there for informal discussions. Gandhi thought that the country was not ripe for mass civil disobedience, but he wanted to start an individual civil disobedience , for which Nehru and Azad were not even prepared . They were unwilling to embarrass the Allied war efforts in any way. Then Nehru expressed, as recorded by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur on 13th October 1940, “For me I have to rebel. Oppose aggressively ...I do not understand your thoughts, your line of action....rebel or not rebel, I feel you are leading the country to destruction. I don’t fit into the Congress.... This is my last Working Committee meetingI look upon it as murder. I think you are unreasonable”. Gandhi then made it clear that he was prepared for Gandhi’s resignation, whereupon the later calmed down. On October 11,1940 the Congress Working Committee decided to start individual civil disobedience.²⁵ The satyagraha was not a mass campaign , but was individual satyagraha , certain persons being selected to shout anti war slogans and get arrested. This war later replaced by what was called representative satyagraha , being offered by groups selected from important members of Congress, who repeated public slogans against the war. ²⁶ The satyagraha was kept limited so as not to embarrass Britain’s war effort by a mass upheaval in India .The aims of the movement were explained as follows by Gandhi in a letter to the Viceroy:

The Congress is as much opposed to victory for Nazism as any Britisher can be. But their objection cannot be carried to the extent of their participation in the war. And since you and Secretary of State for India have declared that the whole of India is voluntarily helping the war effort, it becomes necessary to make that the vast majority of the people of India are not interested in it. They make no distinction between Nazism and the double autocracy that rules India.²⁷

In Punjab the situation was entirely different. There was almost unanimous opposition of the press to the idea of launching civil disobedience movement. Punjab Governor was struck by this unanimity, especially among the Hindu papers which usually supported the Congress blindly. There had been considerable criticism in the columns of these news papers of the recent inconsistencies and changing front of the Congress High Command, while the Muslim press took the line that Congress prestige had never stood lower than it was at the moment. Punjab Governor, H D Craik in his report to the Governor- General mentioned on September 24th, 1940: “I think it would be proper to say that Congressmen on the whole are unenthusiastic, listless and perplexed by the attitude of their leaders”.²⁸ One or two of the Lahore Muslim papers had openly referred to Gandhi as “senile”. Punjab Government felt that that the decision that civil disobedience was to be only by individuals and not general would be received with general relief by all classes. Sikandar Hayat Khan, Punjab Premier confided the Punjab Governor on 15th October, 1940 that Gandhi had nominated about 40 individuals to take part in civil disobedience movement, of whom presumably Vinoba Bhave would be the first to start the campaign and subsequently his statement proved to be true.²⁹ Gandhi’s chief disciple, Vinoba Bhave was accordingly selected as the first individual satyagrahi or civil resister to war³⁰ On October 17, 1940, Vinoba Bhave solemnly inaugurated the individual satyagraha movement by delivering an anti war speech protesting against dragging India into the war against its will at Paunar, a village near Wardha. Before his arrest he delivered an anti war speech. On October 21, he was arrested and sentenced to three months imprisonment.³¹

The General Secretary of the Punjab Congress Committee issued a circular of dated 23 of October, to all Congress Committees in the province enclosing a cyclostyled copy of a summary of Vinobha Bhave’s stock speech³² After Bhave, Pandit Nehru offered himself as the

second volunteer and was arrested on 31st October at the Chheoki railway station and was tried in Gorkhpur prison and was sentenced to four years imprisonment for his speeches delivered early in October. Next satyagrahi was Brahmdu Dutt and was arrested on November 7, 1940. A number of others followed and soon there was a nationwide movement of individual satyagraha³³ Nehru's arrest and conviction aroused singularly little interest in the Punjab and even in Congress circles there was no marked reaction. In some of the bigger towns there were hartals after his arrest, but of a very partial character. In Lahore, for example, only a few shops in the biggest bazaar were closed, but according to Sikandar most of these were only closed as the result of extreme pressure, with in some cases threats of physical violence, from local Congress leaders. In Amritsar an attempted hartal was an ignominious failure and the same was the case in Rawalpindi and Sialkot. At Montgomery the local Congressmen proposed to hold a hartal, but the Congress President, on the Deputy Commissioner pointing out to him that the date fixed coincided with the festival of the Id, immediately agreed to call off the hartal³⁴. From October 17, 1940 to December 1941, the movement passed through four phases. In the first phase, only very select persons were asked to offer satyagraha, for instance, Vinoba Bhave and Jawaharlal Nehru³⁵ Home Department of Government of India observed that the main object behind starting the individual civil disobedience movement was to avoid total immersion in order to keep itself alive and that the best means of doing that was to invite repression against the exercise of some colorable right, such as the freedom of speech, and to exploit to the utmost the nuisance value of intransigence in the hope that popular opinion would be roused against the Government and that some turn of events in the war situation might play into their hands³⁶ MA Jinnah warned the Government at a public meeting at Bombay on 9th December 1940 that the object of the satyagraha movement was to coerce the British Government into conceding the demands of Congress and that if Congress succeeded in compelling the British Government to grant a constitution which reduced 9 crores of Muslims to a position of slavery, the Muslim would never submit to such an arrangement³⁷ The suggestion that Gandhi might shortly embark on a fast caused some consternation in Hindu circles in Punjab, but the comment in the Muslim press continued to be bitter and contemptuous. The Inqilab referred to the proposed fast as "utterly futile and baneful for the high ideals of India" and the Ihsan referred to it as "throwing a light on Gandhi's lowness of character". Inqilab in its November (1940) issue described "Gandhi as the greatest cheat and hypocrite and not truthful at all". Another issue of the same paper alleged that

the underlying motive of Satyagraha was not only hostility to the Government but also to the Muslim community. It characterized the movement as “ a shameful one and demanded Gandhi’s immediate arrest. Another Muslim paper has recently published an effective article on what it called “the fifth column activities of the Congress”. Gandhi’s description of Punjab soldiers as “mercenaries” provoked great resentment in Muslim press and Sikandar in recent speeches made considerable capital out of this indiscreet utterance³⁸. In the second phase which began in the middle of November and lasted till the beginning of January ,1941, Satyagrahis were chosen to represent Congress Working Committee, All India Congress Committee and central and provincial legislatures. Altogether 11 Working Committee members, 196 All India Committee Members and 400 legislators offered to be arrested. Among them were Vallabh Bhai Patel on November 17, detained under the Defence of Indian Rules, Rajagopalachari on December 3, and Abul Kalam Azad on 1st January 1941³⁹. Many Congressmen, including most of the ministers, appeared in the streets, uttered slogans and were arrested and sent to prisons mostly for the year⁴⁰.

In the second fortnight of November 1940, Punjab remained quiet in spite of the starting elsewhere of the Satyagraha campaign on a large scale. The Government noted very little sign of enthusiasm or indeed any great popular interest in the new movement outside Lahore and Amritsar. In these two cities the audiences at political meetings showed a tendency to increase in size and students and extremists generally became somewhat restive. Their view, however, was that “individual satyagraha was “ was an ineffective gesture and they are impatient for some more vigorous line of action. Another significant incident was that the Piece goods Association of Amritsar , the biggest piece goods market in northern India , in November 1940 decided to have no more hartals on the occasion of the arrests of the leaders , as they lost too much business by closing their shops⁴¹. As regards the actual campaign in the Punjab, Punjab Governor’s information in November (1940) was that most of the prospective Satyagrahis were in reality extremely lukewarm. There was said to be a list of some 2,000 such Satyagrahis, but of these only about 700 at an outside estimate were dependable. Among the 40 odd Congress MLAs only 8 were genuine volunteers for the sacrifice: 10 others had been coerced into offering themselves, but it was doubtful whether they would honour their pledge. The Akalis and Dr Satyapal’s group were so far holding aloof from the movement. It was originally announced that the campaign in

the Punjab would be initiated by Mian Iftikharudin MLA, President of the Provincial Congress Committee on the 26th of November(1940) but could not mature for three days and finally made his demonstration at 8.00 pm on 29th November at Baghbanpura, a suburb of Lahore where he resided and was arrested. There was a crowd of about 10,000, mostly students and city riff-raff. There was no difficulty about sending Iftikharrddin away in the police van, but after his departure there was certain amount of jeering and the Superintendent of Police was hit by a brick, but not seriously hurt. The police thereupon made “light lathicharge” upon the crowd which was quickly dispersed. Iftikharuddin was a man of strong communist tendencies and exercised some influence owing to his wealth, which was considerable. The second Satyagrahi was to have been Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava, who was almost the only genuine and whole-hearted supporter of Gandhi in the Punjab. He informed the District Magistrate, that he would make an anti-war demonstration in the Anarkali Bazar (the Oxford Street of Lahore)on 30th November noon. Punjab Government’s Ministers decided to arrest him beforehand under the Defence of India Rules. This was done in the early hours of that day⁴².

In spite of the strained relations between the Indian National Congress and the Akali Dal, many Akalis supported the civil disobedience movement. Master Tara Singh took the position that he would not personally offer the individual satyagraha as desired by the Congress but would also not oppose any important leader of the Dal from offering it under the banner of Indian National Congress. Niranjana Singh Talib, Sardul Singh , Dalip Singh Gill, Uddham Singh , Ranjit Singh Mastana and other leaders of Akali Dal offered individual Satyagraha. However, the Dal did not officially participate in it. By and by the Akalis lost enthusiasm for the individual civil disobedience movement and their participation became less and less.⁴³ Sampuran Singh also offered his arrest. The sentence imposed on Iftikharuddin, who was a wealthy man, was one of a year’s imprisonment plus a fine of Rs. 6,000, and three of his cars were immediately seized to meet the fine . This sentence had, Governor noted, had a valuable deterrent effect. Sampuran Singh before offering himself for Satyagraha, sent a message to JD Anderson, Joint Chief Secretary of Punjab, stating that he would be glad if during the course of his trial, questions, could be put to him that would give him an opportunity of explaining that he was in favour of Sikh recruitment to the army and was performing satyagraha merely out of sense of discipline. Gandhi suspended satyagraha in the Punjab immediately when he learnt of the Sampuran Singh

incident, but allowed its resumption a few days later. Then came his order for a general suspension of satyagraha throughout India till after the Xmas holidays.⁴⁴ Punjab Provincial Congress Committee took steps to remove its records to some secret depositary in December 1940. At this time the Lahore City Congress Committee received notice from landlord of its office to vacate his premises within fortnight, obviously because he feared that the premises might be attached by Government. Abul Kalam Azad was then concerting plans with the local Congress leaders of Punjab in Lahore.⁴⁵ On 18th December 1940 Sardar Sampuran Singh was expelled from the Congress party by Maulana Azad for having contrary attitude towards war. Azad wrote to him: “Your replies in the Court clearly demonstrate that you do not agree with the decision of the Congress about war. In spite of this, you offered yourself as a satyagrahi and made both yourself and party ...ludicrous.”⁴⁶ There was increasing restiveness among students regarding satyagraha at Lahore. This was intensified during December 1940 by the arrest of two brothers, Mahmud Ali and Mazhar Ali, who were the sons of Nawab Muzaffar Khan, a cousin of the Premier. These two youths were ardent communists and they both announced that they intended to commit Satyagraha and an order was served on them under the Defence of India Rules restricting them to the Premier’s tea estate at Palmpur in the Kangra district. They however, disobeyed the order and were immediately arrested and sent to jail. As both were prominent figures in the students’ circles, their arrests caused considerable excitement.”⁴⁷

Whatever his personal view, as a leading soldier in the Congress fight, Bhula Bhai was found to be in the vanguard of individual satyagraha, on the 1st December, 1940, as the President of the Bombay Provincial Committee and a member of Congress Working Committee, he offered individual satyagraha and was arrested on that day. Sarojini Naidu, also a member of Congress Working Committee, and MM Pakvasa, President of the Bombay Legislative Council, were also arrested on the same morning. These arrests were made under the Defence of India Act; and those arrested were taken to the Yervada jail in Poona.⁴⁸

Gandhi ordered the suspension of the campaign from December 24, 1940 to January 4, 1941 as a goodwill gesture for Christmas.⁴⁹ Satyagraha was revived on the 5th of January (third stage) after the “Christmas recess”. Lists of satyagrahis had been prepared by local Congress committees, and several persons named therein and certified by Gandhi proceeded to do what was expected of them. “A satyagrahi,” emphasized Gandhi, “man or woman, once started on satyagraha, if

unarrested , shall not return home , but he shall go from village to village reciting anti war slogans and addressing anti war meetings where necessary and doing constructive propaganda.” Hundred of satyagrahis swelled the chorus: “It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance”. By the end of January the number of convictions had risen to about 2, 250. In several cases fines were imposed instead of imprisonment. But the extent of the movement and the manner in which it was dealt with varied from province to province. It was strongest in the United Provinces and about half the total arrests were made there. North West Frontier Province was the least effected and only two arrests were made there. No satyagraha was offered on January 26 and the people celebrated the Independence Day as prescribed by Gandhi.⁵⁰ Only four or five MLAs in Punjab had offered themselves for arrest in the second week of January 1941 and in the Rawalpindi Commissioner’s Division there had been no satyagraha at all, as not a single candidate for arrest had come forward. Punjab Governor HD Craik reported the Government of India on 13th January: “There had been no popular excitement , any kind , and interest in the movement seems to be rapidly waning....” One section of the Ahrar led by Maulvi Daud Ghaznavi, had then identified itself completely with the Congress campaign of satyagraha on account of understanding with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Daud Ghaznavi and his supporters published a statement in which they announced that they intended to “completely indentify their political activities and program with those of the Congress” and in accordance with this announcement three or four Ahrar courted arrest in January 1940. ⁵¹At this time Sikandar suggested to the Governor of Punjab that the best way of preventing the satyagraha movement from gaining more popular support would be to set up some machinery for working out the general scheme of the future constitution with the consultation of the Premiers or ex-Premiers of all the Provinces and other leaders of important sections of public opinion with which the Governor did not concede.⁵² Satyagraha at this stage in Punjab, excited very little interest and it was significant that reports of arrests had been relegated to a back page of the Tribune. Governor noted and reported in February 1941: “I have never known a time when the Congress credit stood at lower ebb and there is a general reluctance on the part of Congressmen themselves to court arrestThere had been two or three more arrests of important communist workers and the Punjab Communist Party has now been practically completely disorganized. ... The infliction of fines in suitable cases has been a valuable deterrent.”⁵³

The third phase of the movement in Punjab was ,however, advertised to start on the 1st of March (otherwise started on 5th January 1941 at all India level) and it was announced that a list of between 700 to 1000 satyagrahis was ready. Up to the end of February the total number of satyagrahis arrested was 227 and there were about 81 arrests in the first week of March 1941. There had been no general increase of public interest in the movement, though there had been minor disorderly incidents at Multan, where the police making an arrest was stoned, and at Hoshiarpur.”⁵⁴ 25 arrests were made up to 22nd March 1941 and the quality of satyagrahis now coming forward was very poor.⁵⁵ By August the satyagraha campaign was languishing. The desertion of Dr Satyapal and quarrels between Iftikhar-ud-Din and Gopi Chand had further weakened the Congress position. Attempts to reason with the Mahatma and induce him to suspend his crusade had not succeeded in extracting any further inspiration from the oracle.⁵⁶ At the end of 1940, about 15,000 carefully chosen individuals, including most of the Congress Working Committee, courted up to a year’s arrest each by pronouncing an lawful sentence against participation in the War: ‘It is wrong to support this war with men and money.’ Useful for the Congress’s morale in much of India, the campaign evoked little excitement in Punjab, where political passions revolved around the Pakistan demand.⁵⁷ Comic side of the satyagraha was that a worker from Punjab offered satyagarha without the permission of Gandhi or the Working Committee. When arrested, he put up a defense, against the explicit instructions of Congress. The trying Magistrate convicted him and fined him one anna which he paid from his own pocket and set him free. This brought such ridicule on the movement in Punjab that Maulana Azad had to go there to set matters right. On his way back he was arrested at Lahore and sentenced to imprisonment for two years.⁵⁸

The fourth stage of the campaign began in April. The rank and file members of the Congress were enrolled. The result was the sharp rise in the number of satyagrahis. By midsummer over 20,000 had been convicted as many as 14, 000 being in jail at one time. The number of satyagrahis would have been many times larger but for the limits which Gandhi imposed on the campaign. When, the Hindu complained that that the campaign had produced no appreciable impression on the war effort, Gandhi retorted that it was not intended to hamper that effort.⁵⁹ Organized in easy stages from the autumn of 1940, it reached it reached its peak in the following May when some 14000 persons were in jails⁶⁰ On April 22, 1941, LS Amery , Secretary of

State for India, referring to the satyagraha campaign, observed: “This campaign of civil disobedience by installments has now been in progress for nearly six months. And we are now in the rank and file phase.The whole business is as regrettable as it is irrational but the Government had and has no alternative to enforcing the law.....” In his rejoinder Gandhi stated on April 27: “.....Amery has rendered no service to Great Britain by his contemptuous disregard of the situation as it exists now in India and the facts that stare one in the face.Mr. Amery, in utter disregard of truth , misleads his ignorant audience....”⁶¹

The fourth phase is noteworthy for the protest of Rabindernath Tagore against barbarism of war. He declared in his world message: “ It is no longer possible for me to retain my respect for that mockery of civilization, which believes in ruling by force and has no faith in freedom at all.....” He pointed out that satyagraha was a moral protest and not a politically motivated challenge to embarrass the Government. Many eminent Indians outside the Congress were perturbed by this insensate persecution.⁶² October 17, 1941 marked the first anniversary of the inauguration of the individual satyagraha campaign. Besides the satyagrahis, thousands of detainees were rotting in prisons under the Defence of India Rules. In a statement issued at the end of October, Gandhi observed that satyagraha must neither be expanded into a mass movement, as some desired, since the mass action during the war would embarrass the Government and “at this stage, without communal unity, is an invitation to civil war”, nor must it be abandoned. It did not matter how few the satyagrahis might be; if there were only ten or two, they would represent the whole Congress....as one ambassador represents his people.”He asked, “To give up civil disobedience would be folly”.⁶³

During the fourteen months, over 25,000 satyagrahis were jailed. These included even those who could be potential satyagrahis or were arrested before they could offer satyagraha.⁶⁵ Civil disobedience the campaign continued, till the Japanese menace began to hover over the Indian skies and prowl round the circling seas. Thousands satyagrahis had been locked in On December 4, 1941 the general release commenced throughout India. .⁶⁴ From Punjab the number that went behind the bars officially as individual satyagrahis was 1372. But besides these a large number of persons were convicted for anti war and political grounds other than those connected with the civil disobedience prison, but in the new situation the Congress Working Committee declared its

disagreement with Gandhi's principle of absolute non violence even against a foreign aggressor. Thereupon, on December 15, 1941 Gandhi resigned his leadership of the Congress movement. The government helped in winding up civil disobedience by releasing the prisoners. Jawaharlal and Abul Kalam Azad were released on December 3, to be followed by others.⁶⁶ With Gandhi's resignation, individual satyagraha came to an end after lasting for a year and two months.⁶⁷

Colonial view was reflected through the statement of PE Roberts, "The most reluctant and least successful of civil disobedience movement followed and the movement in fact had no real popular backing and was chiefly interesting as an index of what the Mahatma could achieve through personal influence alone"⁶⁸. Individual Civil Disobedience from its very nature could not create much excitement or impact. It was only a formal kind of protest and the British did not take it seriously, nor was she prepared to make any political concession in light of individual civil disobedience movement. Rather through the Atlantic Charter of August 1941, jointly prepared by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister W Churchill, spoke of the right of all people to those the form of Government under which they lived; in September 1941 Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister and the bulwark of British imperialism boastfully stated that the Charter did not apply to India, for he had not become His Majesty's first Minister to preside over the liquidation of British Empire.⁶⁹

Conclusion: Above given commentary and the state of affairs in which Mahatma Gandhi launched individual civil disobedience movement it can in one piece be stated that it was a moral remonstrance against compellingly dragging India into the 2nd world war by the colonial masters, not with a view to embarrass the imperial war effort. The movement also reflects the extent to which the British are selfish in ignoring the logical demand of India regarding the post war constitutional status of India even at a time when Britain's political and military position was grim but promoting imperial war machine in every possible manner. Though the colonial Government in India did not take the movement seriously yet the contingency plan she had made with the consultation of British Government in advance to crush it. While at all India level movement became very popular and at one time about 25000 satyagrahis were jailed. Besides these a large number of persons were convicted for anti war and political grounds other than those connected with the civil disobedience prison. The number of satyagrahis would have been many times larger but for the limits which Gandhi imposed on the campaign. Struggle could not

become popular in Punjab on account of the popularity of Unionist Party and its leader, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan , enigmatic attitude of Akalis and Master Tara Singh and lukewarm attitude of Satyapal group in Congress along with internal squabbles between Congress president Iftikhar-ud-Din and Gopi Chand Bhargav. Congressmen in the Punjab except in Lahore and Amritsar on the whole are unenthusiastic. Students however participated at their own level. Muslim Press of Punjab was also hostile towards it. MA Jinnah had already warned the Government against the object of the satyagraha movement. From Punjab the number that went behind the bars officially as individual satyagrahis was 1372. Gandhi however successfully boosted the morale and confidence of his countrymen through this movement in the face of the onslaught of British imperialism. Movement also prepared the spade work for the patriotic Indians' next year high magnitude Quit India struggle. Movement was turned out to be the harbinger of the final assault against the colonial edifice which was demolished by nationalistic Indians in 1947 culminating in the dawn of Indian independence.

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