Chapter VII

ROLE OF SATYAGRAHIS IN EAST INDIA

In the eastern region of India, the Civil Disobedience Movement received momentum soon after the termination of the Dandi March and Gandhiji's call for commencement of campaign in the whole of India. Soon the salt satyagraha, the picketing of shops dealing in wines, intoxicants and foreign goods and other forms of agitation commenced all over Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam. The intensity of the movement in these regions depended largely upon the ability of local leadership and the enthusiasm shown by the satyagrahis.

BENGAL

In Bengal, unprecedented response was in evidence on all sides. All arrangements for launching satyagraha were completed by 3 April 1930. Volunteers were enrolled in large numbers, and instructed every evening in the principles of satyagraha. They came out in processions and held massive meetings to inform the people that they were going to be the 'soldiers of the nation in the coming fight for freedom'.

To celebrate the first day of the National Week, a largely attended public meeting was held on 6 April 1930 at the Shraddhanand Park in Calcutta. Its President, Lalit Mohan Das, in his impressive speech, made a fervent appeal to the people to join the national movement and make it a grand success.

1. AICC Papers. File 6-96 (KX1), 1930.
2. Ibid.
3. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 7 April 1930.
Another mammoth public meeting was held at Wellington Square under the chairmanship of J.M. Sen Gupta. He exhorted the people to participate in the movement in large numbers and carry on the fight, in a non-violent way till salt tax was abolished. He directed the Congressmen to go to the villages and carry on vigorous propaganda to rouse the masses who dwelt mostly in the rural surroundings. He concluded with an appeal to stick to the programme of Gandhiji which would bring them victory.

In a large meeting of the Bengal Students' Association attended by seven hundred delegates at the Albert Hall, J.M. Sen Gupta asked the student community to join the movement, en masse with 'restrained patriotism' as their guide and without letting their passion -- either of adventure or of cowardice -- to sway their imagination and judgment. National week celebrations were also held at Howrah, Kidderpore and other suburban places. Everywhere speakers, addressing the large gathering, appealed to the audience to follow the lead of Gandhiji in carrying out the comprehensive programme of non-violent struggle.

On the same day, Satish Chandra Das Gupta, President, Bengal Council of Civil Disobedience, made Coochpur Khadi Pratishthan a satyagraha camp. From there he led the first batch of thirty Bengali-speaking as well as Hindi-speaking volunteers to Mahishathan to break the salt law. After finishing their operations, the satyagrahis returned to their base victoriously, jubilantly shouting the slogan 'the salt law is broken'. More than a hundred volunteers had joined the camp. Every day a chosen

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
batch of them marched singing national songs as soldiers of freedom struggle to the place selected for satyagraha where they broke salt law at a definite time after announcing to the government their intention to do so and faced the consequences bravely and patiently. This was continued till they were physically prevented by force from breaking the law. In the words of their 'dictator' there was a general non-violent upheaval in which the volunteers willingly invited sufferings to themselves to uphold the cause of freedom.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* reported the details of the Civil Disobedience Movement under several banner headlines such as, 'Bengal Astir, Grim and Fearless Determination', 'Salt Preparation at Mahisbathan in Large Scale', which created excitement all over the country in favour of the movement.

The Bengal Government did not watch the growing intensity of the movement unperturbed. On 14 April 1930, Section 144 was promulgated in Calcutta, prohibiting public meetings, processions and assemblies. A meeting organised at Beadon Square to violate the law of sedition was dispersed by the police and seditious literature taken possession of. J.M. Sen Gupta and four students were arrested at a meeting in Cornwallis Square and sentenced by the Chief Presidency Magistrate to six months rigorous imprisonment on charges of sedition, conspiracy and obstructing police officers in discharge of their duty. In accordance with the mandate of the Indian National Congress, no defence was offered...

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1. Transcript of Interview with Satish Chandra Das Gupta, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
3. *Halifax Papers*, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 14 April 1930; and *Young India*, 17 April 1930.
by anyone of them. However, J.M. Sen Gupta made a statement in which he made the position of the satyagrahis explicit that they were engaged in non-violent action and would not take any part in the proceedings. One of the students asked the Magistrate to inflict a harder sentence as it would be to the interest of the country. The people gathered in the court room to hear the judgement and demonstrators outside shouted Bande Mataram.

At the College Square, about 10,000 students assembled under the auspices of the Bengal National Militia and read out passages from certain proscribed literature despite police warning. In the police lathi charge, that ensued, some students were seriously injured and removed to the Medical College Hospital, while a large number of others including Sachindra Mitra and Surugopala Das Gupta, President and Secretary respectively on the national militia, were arrested. They exercised creditable self-restraint to remain non-violent until the end.

On 15 April, there was much violence in Calcutta. The occasion was arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru and J.M. Sen Gupta. Some enraged persons provoked by the indiscriminate police violence burnt two tram cars and wrecked a third one in south Calcutta. The members of the fire brigade, engaged in extinguishing the flames, were attacked causing serious injuries to some of them. In retaliation, a European sergeant opened fire injuring two Sikhs and causing an arrest of thirteen others. An Anglo-Indian girl coming to the town on a motor-cycle was stoned by the crowd.

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1. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 16 April 1930.
2. Ibid.
north Calcutta, students held up tram cars and cut off the trolley ropes. On police intervention, there was brickbattting. Several places were found strewn with brickbats and vehicular traffic virtually came to a standstill. With superior police violence, the crowd was dispersed. A Bengali was reported to have hit F.D. Bartley, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, and was arrested. The city was in a state of siege. To curb the 'war atmosphere' and scare the people, military forces were mobilised at Lalbazar. Armoured cars were in evidence on the streets; and parks and squares became temporary police stations. There was complete halt in the town except for a few Muslim shops which did their normal business. Students of schools and colleges including those of the Bethune College for girls absented themselves. Thirty-five persons were arrested.

Determined resistance against the efforts of the police to seize the manufactured salt at Kalikapur resulted in injuries to five satyagrahis. To provide medical relief to the injured satyagrahis in such eventualities, Dr. Niranjan Sircar, President of the Bengal Medical Association, appealed to the medical practitioners to form an ambulance corps. As a result of it, a medical base was started at Kalikapur.

The Viceroy felt deeply concerned about the deteriorating political situation in Calcutta and telegraphically informed the Secretary of State, "...situation in Calcutta is threatening. Police are openly filthy abused and hustled and threatened with

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 16 April 1930.
social boycott. Reporters are unable to take notes. The Secretary of State cryptically reacted, 'How much easier it is for us when the civil disobedience people are foolish enough to put themselves so obviously within the clutches of authority, such as when they boil salt in pans.'

The Governor of Bengal, who confessed in a communiqué to the Government of India that '... the general situation is difficult,' assured it as well that 'All processions and meetings have been prohibited.'

The salt satyagraha spread to all other parts of the province in no time. In Hooghly, Khulna, Berisal, Tamluk, Midnapur, Pichhobansi in Contai, Mahisbathan in 24-Perganas and Chittagong salt law was broken. In fact, in all the coastal districts preparation for breaking the salt law was in progress.

The RICC established camps at Nila and Kalikapur in Diamond Harbour sub-division of 24-Perganas. The Abhay Ashram of Comilla, Khadi Pratishthan of Sodapur, Swaraj Ashram of Khalispara (Khulna) and Khadi Mandal of Ramnagri (Hooghly) were the most active centres of the movement. Volunteers began pouring in from north Calcutta, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Pabna, Faridpur, Burdwan and Chandernagore to the Sodapur recruiting camp. Krishnadasi, formerly one of the secretaries of Gandhiji, was placed in charge of it. Thousands of people went to Mahisbathan by motor boats.

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2. Halifax Papers. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 17 April 1930.
4. AICC Papers. File C-86, 1930; and Young India, 1 May 1930.
taxis, buses, private cars and on foot to have a pinch of the contraband salt. Fancy prices were offered for it. For days and weeks Mahishabathan became a place of pilgrimage.

Hartals were observed in the cities to make the people's protest against Gandhi's arrest. The Calcutta Corporation adjourned its meeting on the afternoon of 5 May 1930, and decided to close all its institutions on the next day.

The Civil Disobedience Movement swayed the imagination of the people. Boycott of foreign goods gained momentum. Remarkable success was achieved in respect of boycott of cigarettes. They were replaced by the Indian cheroots and bidis. The Imperial Tobacco Company was very hard hit. G.D. Birla was suspected of financing the boycott of foreign cloth. Funds for the Congress were raised by street and house to house collections. The volunteers were drawn from the students and teachers of private schools and colleges. Women picketers also came to the fore. The Calcutta Corporation became the virtual gold mine of the Congress. Most of the contributions were obtained from stallholders, shop-keepers and contractors.

Calcutta picketing continued to plague the Bengal Government till the very end of the movement. In fact, boycott in Calcutta was greatly helped by the Narwar business community. Besides, the local Chamber of Commerce under the chairmanship of G.D. Birla constantly helped the movement in many ways. Calcutta was the greatest centre for

1. Ibid.
2. Young India, 15 May 1930.
importing foreign piece-goods. Nearly half of the total imports
was distributed through this commercial centre. To boost up the
rapid spread of the swadeshi movement, the Marwari importers who
controlled 75% of the imports, pledged not to import or make new
purchases of foreign cloth up to the end of the current year.

A section of the zamindars, mostly the younger ones in
age who were dissatisfied with the attitude of the officials,
joined the Congress or showed sympathy towards it. But the pre-
ponderant section of them remained loyal to the alien government.
Their resourcefulness and influence were of great help to the
official machinery and the British interest.

The government tried to stem the tide of peaceful
revolution. It declared the Councils of Civil Disobedience in
Midnapur district, Tamluk subdivision and Contai as lawful
associations. At Purulia, the police searched Shilpa Ashram and
Deshbandhu Press and seized copies of the prescribed literature.
A notification was issued in Ghatag subdivision warning the people
that their contributing to the Congress fund shall make them
liable to a fine of Rs. 100/- or six months’ imprisonment. At
Mymensingh, the police surrounded a temporary Congress hospital
and arrested patients who were being treated there. At Cossipur, on 20 May, the police assaulted the non-violent satyagrahis.
Their lathi blows fell on a number of influential Muslims and two
shops were looted by the police. Sat. Urmiladevi, sister of the

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1. Purushotamdas Thakurdas Papers. G.D. Birla to Ambalal
   Sardarji, 30 April 1930.
2. Young India, 22 May 1930.
3. Young India, 29 May 1930.
4. Young India, 5 June 1930.
late Deshbandhu, and President of Nari Satyagrahi Samiti sustained severe lathi blow on her right shoulder by the police, while she was picketing liquor shops with other ladies.

The more poisonous papers were ordained. Arrests and intimidations reached high. By the end of July 1930, 4305 were convicted as political prisoners. The police tried all sorts of devices to restore normalcy in the province. In the words of B. L. Mitter, the Law Member of the Viceroy's Council, the anti-government feeling had reached the masses. He accused the Congress of intimidation and terrorism, and applauded the police for maintenance of peace and prevention of violent outbursts. Despite police control, the Congress continued to be the dominating force in Calcutta and the pro-government section became demoralised.

The Nari Satyagrahi Samiti functioned under the supervision of prominent ladies like Mrs. Bessati Devi, Mrs. J. M. Sen Gupta, Urmila Devi and Jyotirmaya Ganguly. Processions were taken out barefooted with tri-colour flags in their hands. Foreign cloth shops and educational institutions were picketed. Section 144 was defied. Hardships caused to them by weather and rough dealings of the people in course of picketing were borne with patience. Contraband salt was sold from house to house. While manufacturing salt and holding the national flag aloft many of them were

1. Young India, 19 June 1930.
4. Ibid.
5. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 24 June 1930.
assaulted and injured. Several of them were arrested and convicted for various terms of imprisonment.

For leading the anniversary procession of Deshbandhu, Mrs. Indumati Coenka was awarded nine months’ imprisonment and Urmila Devi, Vimalpratibha Devi, Mohini Devi, and Jyotirmayi Ganguli were sentenced to six months’ imprisonment. Seven volunteers including Miss Santi Das, Secretary of Nari Satyagraha Samiti, were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. A protest procession organised by eighty ladies of the Nari Satyagraha Samiti was held up by the police. Despite being cordoned round and asked to disperse, they did not budge even an inch over eight hours. Besides, six ladies were arrested at Bogra and eighteen at Hilly.

Crowds of people, gathered near the picketing places, were dispersed by the police. About a hundred ladies picketed foreign cloth shops in Barrabazar and Howrahpore. On 7 July 1930, they were assaulted and the office of the BPCC was raided by the police in the morning. Fifty persons found therein including Lalit Mohan Das, Vice-President of the BPCC, were arrested. In the afternoon, police searched the office, seized copies of the bulletin and arrested Madhu Sudan Chatterjee, its office-in-charge. The Sodepur Khadi Pratisthan was also searched. A large number of male volunteers, picketing liquor shops in Calcutta, Howrah and Hooghly were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The Press Ordinance too claimed its toll. The secretaries of Barrabazar.

1. AICC Papers. File G-26, 1930; and Young India, 19 June 1930.
2. Young India, 3 July 1930.
bazaar Congress and Civil Disobedience Committee were hauled up for publishing the 'Satyagraha Samad' and 'Congress Bulletins'.

In August 1930, the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State, 'In Calcutta) ... many small Marwari firms are in a bad way, but although they eagerly desire the lifting of the boycott, they have not the moral courage to stand out against it, mainly because of social pressure brought to bear on them.'

The tempo of the Civil Disobedience Movement was high all over Bengal. Everywhere its leaders were arrested and imprisoned one after another and each in his turn nominated his successor on his arrest. Shortly after the release of J.M. Sen Gupta on 23 September, he was nominated President of the Congress. In that capacity he stated in a speech in Delhi on 6 October:

'I know that the feeling is deep rooted in the minds of the people that they do not want the British rule. The feeling is deep rooted in the mind of every villager.... The villagers have been assaulted and taken to British prison.... We know the strength of this non-violent non-co-operation.'

This speech was considered seditious, and Sen Gupta was sentenced to one year's imprisonment. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* condemned this sentence as incarceration. Another notable Congress leader, Dr. Bikram Chand Roy, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

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The no-tax campaign was another important item in the Civil Disobedience programme. Leaflets were printed, issued and systematically 'broadcasted' for the purpose. Signatures were obtained from the villagers, pledging themselves to the non-payment of the chowkidari tax. The affected areas were Contai and Tamluk in Midnapore, Arambagh in Hooghly, Bishnupur in Bankura, Belurghat in Dinajpur, Nababganj and Vikrampur in Dacca, Maju in Howrah and Mahesbathan in 24-Parganas.

The history of the no-tax campaign is full of brutal assaults on men and still more brutal molestation of women. Firing was frequently indulged in. The government generally combated the campaign with shooting and terror tactics although it was perfectly non-violent. As a result of it, twelve persons were killed at Khirai in Midnapore and two were killed and several injured at Mayna in Tamluk.

In a police raid on Kshandigram in Contai on the night of 31 July 1930, a young woman of about 18 was chased inside the compound of the house of Bhola Nath Das by a policeman and 'raziished' by him. An outrageous attempt was made at the modesty of the wife of Pithu Cherai of Childiveri in Contai on 4 September 1930. She was pulled at and her breasts were twisted. Thus numerous cases of outrageous conduct of police were reported.

At certain places, the police took away valuable gold and silver ornaments and articles of domestic use such as utensils, beddings, rice, dal, chas, clothes, pillows, etc. At Jatrasahi,

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1. Young India, 26 June 1930.
2. AICC Papers. File 5-86, 1930.
3. Ibid.
Dhananjoy Nasakar, his mother and wife with a three-month-old infant in her arms were arrested and taken to Berasat Hajat and kept in the lock up for refusing to part with a cow worth Rs. 40/- for a tax of two annas.

At Hilli in Midnapore the people refused to pay not only the chowkidari tax but also the land rent. According to the District Magistrate of Midnapore, a large number of chowkiders were coerced by the volunteers to resign their posts. In some cases, their paddy seedlings were damaged and they were seriously boycotted.

In the villages of Tamluk and Contai, police was let loose and men and women were beaten with canes. A satyagrahi was first assaulted and then ducked in the canal and again beaten. Everything of value was taken away; the rest were damaged or destroyed. Very few people could be cajoled or threatened to make payment. The attachment of property oftener than not looked like loot.

Much enthusiasm regarding the movement was shown in Tamluk, a sub-division of the district of Midnapore. On 5 April 1930, a huge procession of about 3,000 persons, headed by several hundred ladies, mostly purishnashin and belonging to respectable families was arranged. The procession marched to Morgaon, the salt centre, about twelve miles from Tamluk town, and salt satyagraha was started on the next day. The enthusiasm was so great that the first half-s-tola of contraband salt was bid for Rs. 500/-.

1. Ibid.
2. The Challenge (Calcutta), 11 August 1930.
3. Ibid.
To prevent more people from joining the anti-British movement, the police resorted to forcible occupation of twenty-seven houses in the locality. Shrimati Charusila Devi, the noted lady worker of Midnapur, who had contributed considerably to the cause of female awakening in Tamluk, was imprisoned.

A special session of the All-Bengal Students' Convention attended by about seven hundred delegates and presided over by J. N. Sen Gupta decided upon the duties of the student community in the national struggle. It affirmed the programme of Civil Disobedience Movement and decided to participate in it whole-heartedly. Those who did not directly participate in it were urged emphatically to take up active propaganda work for Civil Disobedience in the villages by preaching the ideals of revolution amongst the peasants and workers and leading the struggle to its cherished goal as no movement had ever succeeded without the active support of youths.

Deeply moved by the appeals of the national leaders and the work done by Gandhiji, a large number of students came out of their colleges in Calcutta as well as elsewhere in Bengal and joined the National Week celebrations. The students' convention held at Albert Hall, decided to abstain from classes throughout the National Week and work out the Congress programme. The students of Vidyasagar College held a largely attended meeting at Arya Samaj Hall, passed a similar resolution and formed a committee consisting of twelve students to implement it. They spent the

2. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 10 April 1930.
week in selling the national badges and furthering the national programme with the sale proceeds. They brought students of other colleges to the freedom struggle. For their anti-government activities, thirty of them were arrested and fifteen received injuries while violating the law of sedition in a meeting of the Bengal National Militia held at the College Square. Suchindra Nath Mitter, its President and Durgapada Das Gupta, its Secretary, were among the arrested. At this meeting, proscribed leaflets were distributed and extracts from the proscribed literature were read. The Viceroy informed the Secretary of State on 12 April 1930, 'A disquieting feature in Calcutta has been the active association of students, some of whom have left their studies, with the disobedience movement'.

On 1 July 1930, at an All-Bengal Students' Convention held in Calcutta, Mrs. C.R. Das called upon the students to suspend their studies and join the 'national war' of liberation. Consequently many institutions were closed sine die just after their reopening and others which remained open were picketed. An appeal issued by the Calcutta University not to desist from their normal educational work was of no avail. As a result of the strike, the preliminary law examination of the university could not be held. Dr. B.C. Roy resigned from the membership of the syndicate owing to his differences of opinion with other members on the issue of students' participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

1. The Amrita Bazar Patrika. 12 April 1930.
2. Halifax Papers. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 12 April 1930.
On 18 July, seventeen girl picketers were arrested in two batches while picketing at the gate of Bethune College for girls. They were taken away in a prison-van somewhere and released unconditionally in the suburbs. In the name of dispersing unlawful assemblies, some picketers were arrested on 26 July and locked up for over 24 hours in a room not big enough to afford them even sitting accommodation. After the arrest of the second batch, 800 lady students of the college rushed towards the college gate to join the movement, but were prevented from leaving the compound by the professors with police assistance.

In the Presidency College also the attendance was very thin and majority of the students at the Scottish Church College was absent. The students of the Presidency College, expelled on the first day of picketing, were arrested on 30 July 1930 on entering the college compound and assaulted on shouting Bande Mataram. In protest fifty per cent students left their classes. Meanwhile, picketing in the Scottish Church College took a serious turn. Even professors were not allowed to enter the college. The college authorities therefore requisitioned the police and got seventeen picketers arrested, but they were subsequently released.

Meanwhile, Hem Chandra Ghosh, Secretary of the BFCC, issued a leaflet, 'To the students of Bengal' in which he made a stirring appeal to them. 'Friends, no living nation under alien

3. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
rule can ever be at peace with its rulers, for peace means submission and submission means death of all that is vital in the nation.

'Students of Bengal, 'Now or Never'. A month hence, a week hence, it will be too late. Come out in your hundreds and thousands and defeat Ordinances, defeat batons and bullets, defeat howitzers and machineguns. Come out and conquer freedom. May the land of Chittaranjan and Chittaranjan prove once more the shrine of Indian liberty.' The Chief Presidency Magistrate, in his judgement on 1 September 1930, called this leaflet as 'greatly seditious based on hatred of the Government...' and sentenced Hem Chandra Ghosh to two years rigorous imprisonment.

Various political and non-political organisations representing the educational and commercial institutions in Bengal, voiced their unanimous feelings of support and sympathy to the organisers of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The prominent among them were the All-Bengal Students' Association, the Bengal Muslim Political Conference, the Bengal Provincial Political Conference, the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Bengal branch and various mercantile associations affiliated to it and the Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta.

The Muslims did not remain unaffected by the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Bengal Muslim Political Conference held at Chittagong on 21 April 1930 identified itself entirely and wholeheartedly with the national goal of independence for India and urged the Muslim community to co-operate in every legitimate way possible for the attainment of swaraj and democratic freedom. It

1. Ibid.
exhorted the Muslims to make equal sacrifice with all sister communities and take an honourable part in the Civil Disobedience Movement. This appeal proved effective. The upper and middle class Muslim men and women were quite active in Noakhali, Tipporeh, Bogura, Serhatia, Gaibandha and a few other towns. The leaders of Jamaat-ul-Ulema, Mufti Kefayetullah and Ahmed Syed were active in pro-Congress activities in the towns of East Bengal. A leaflet, entitled 'British are the Common Enemies of Hindus and Muslims alike, particularly of the Muslims' was widely circulated by them in Chittagong, Comilla and Mymensingh. Another prominent Muslim leader, Maulvi Mujibur Rahman, preached the gospel of Civil Disobedience Movement in Jessore. In the DCC meeting at Jessore attended by Muslim cloth dealers, tailors, and outfitters, a unanimous boycott resolution was passed. The students of the Dacca University did not lag behind in their contribution in the independence struggle. They illuminated their hostels on 26 January 1931; hoisted the national flag and paraded the streets chanting Bande Mataram, Gandhiji Ki Jai and Allah-o-Akbar. They also resorted to peaceful picketing and distributed the proscribed literature in the meetings arranged by them.

Perturbed by official repression, more than a dozen influential mercantile associations affiliated to the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, addressed a letter to the Viceroy protesting against the indiscriminate physical assaults on

peaceful and innocent khadi clad pedestrians on the roads, abuse of law in dealing with the satyagrahis, adoption of the policy of general terrorism all over the country and disregard of the common canons of every civilised government in taking resort to firing by the British authorities. They frankly expressed their view instead of being subdued by repression, the political feelings of the people would be hardened and the movement would emerge stronger and widespread.

In June 1930, the Secretary, Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, addressed a protest letter against the promulgation of the picketing ordinance to the Home Secretary, questioning its raison d'être and urging the government to repeal it without delay as it was an affront to Indian patriotism and would be met with the strongest resentment from all quarters. Characterising picketing as a peaceful and perfectly legitimate activity of the exploited nation, when the government was not willing to concede to its national demand for a policy of protection of Indian industries and prohibition of the use of liquor, he pointed out that the British policy of forcing its goods into India against the wishes of the people would never serve the object to sell its goods in India by force. On the contrary, there was every apprehension of such a policy being resented and relations with the British people becoming still more estranged.

At some places in Bengal, 'unthinkable cruelties' were practised in snatching flags from volunteers. At a small village

2. Ibid., pp. 418-19.
in Midnapore district, an old woman, Matangini Hazra, was shot dead while leading a procession with a flag in her hand. At first, her right hand was shot, but she held the flag with the left, and the second bullet felled her on the ground with the flag still in her hand. Another old woman shouted Hondo Mataram slogan from her house. For this, an English 'tommy' entered the house and bayoneted her.

Many other gruesome stories of similar atrocities in Midnapore and elsewhere were recorded during the movement. Numerous house-holders were imprisoned for giving shelter, food or water to Congress volunteers who had been beaten and lying helpless. At Kherasai a crowd collected round a house, where distraint of property was being made, was fired upon. As a result one man was killed and several were injured. At Chechma firing on retreating crowd resulted in six persons being killed and eighteen wounded. At Contai a crowd watching the preparation of salt was fired upon and 25 persons were wounded. Besides, the police entered several college-buildings and belaboured the 2 students sitting in class-rooms.

In Beriasal 500 persons were injured in a lathi-charge in one day. In Tamluk the police set fire to the property of satyagrahis and their sympathisers. Reports of indecent assaults were also reported from many quarters. In Gopinathpur Congress volunteers were mercilessly beaten. This infuriated the villagers who seized the policemen, locked them up in a local school and

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2. Ibid.
set fire to it. The Congress volunteers broke the door open and rescued the females from the police at the risk of their lives.

With the intensification of the movement, the government became more and more ruthless and resorted to brutal methods for its suppression. Instead of the former practice of wholesale arrests of satyagrahis, the police started attacking them with iron-shod or leather-covered sticks. Many of the volunteers sent by the Bengal Provincial Students' Association and the All Bengal Students' Association to offer satyagraha were mercilessly beaten. Even the helpless political prisoners in jail were not spared.

A prominent leader, Surajkant Banerjee of satyagraha camp, Belur, stated that he and nine other satyagrahis were arrested at the Beadon Square and taken to Jorasangan them lock up and mercilessly beaten by the sergeants with canes for two days and let off with a warning not to return to Calcutta again.

At Mahishthathan, the police broke the salt pan, threw hot liquid on the bodies of two satyagrahis and assaulted another in a bid to snatch a small bag of contraband salt from him. In this scuffle, the satyagrahis received inner injuries and his clothes were torn, but he succeeded in defending his precious charge. At Contai, Harisunder Chakravarty, a graduate satyagrahi and his nine associates were made 'stark naked'. They had to run one-and-a-half mile for cover. Another satyagrahi Sudhir Chakravarty, had a

1. Ibid., pp. 550-51.
3. Young India, 30 May 1930.
came thrust in his rectum.

'All kinds of indignities were inflicted on the population, which were followed as usual by arrests.... There was a reign of terror throughout Bengal. The over-all attitude of the Government indicated that there was a complete reversal of policy and the authorities had decided to rule with the lathi and the gun'.

Getting these reports, Gandhiji bitterly remarked that these were 'Christian gifts from a Christian Viceroy'.

The repression aroused deep resentment all over the country. In protest against it, twenty pleaders of Dinajpur observed a hartal for which notices under the Legal Practitioners' Act were served against them, warning against its consequences.

Newspapers and periodicals also could not escape from the repressive policy. The publication of The Hindu Panch, Satyaagraха News, Swadhinata, Muktiwadi, Jagnan, Anandabazar Patrika, Liberty, Adвance, Bangawadi and Swatantra was stopped and their editors and printers were prosecuted.

The number of political prisoners in Bengal jails by 15 November 1930 was 4,790 out of which 4,736 were males and 74 females; 4,684 Hindus and 106 Muslims.

The condition of satyagrahis in jails was deplorable. Most of them were classified as 'C' class convicts, irrespective

2. J. B. Kripalani, Gandhi: His Life and Thought (Delhi, 1970), p. 140.
3. Ibid.
5. Home Pol. Files 173/II - 173/V, 1930; and Young India, 8 May 1930.
of their social status. The food served to them was very bad in 'shape' and the space allotted was small in dimensions. The Alipore Jail had capacity for 1,400 prisoners, but 2,000 were lodged in it. Even the godowns and damp floors were used for their accommodation. Consequently, there were numerous cases of dysentery and influenza and overcrowding in the jail hospital. As a protest against the bad condition in jails, there were hunger strikes in the Barisal and Alipore jails. The police resorted to lathi charge on the strikers as a result of which many of them sustained injuries. Subhas Bose remained unconscious for three hours, developed temperature and was put in a solitary cell.

**Bihar**

In Bihar ground for widespread Civil Disobedience

Movement was prepared by Rajendra Prasad, after the Lahore Congress, on his returning from Ahmedabad in February 1930 and by a political tour of the Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru, in Champaran, Saran, Musaffarpur and Chapra districts from 31 March to 3 April 1930. The salt satyagraha programme of Gandhiji finalized the shape of the movement and go-ahead signals given to all the places in the province made the movement a general feature within a few days.

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In the first week of April about 5,000 volunteers were enrolled and subsequently their numbers gradually went on swelling up. The Searchlight reported, 'the thrill of a new hope, the surge of a new aspiration, the pursuit of noble idea and romance of a new sacrifice' surcharged the atmosphere.

Champanar and Seren were the first to come in the field to start salt satyagraha. In the former district, the first jattha, consisting of thirteen satyagrahis, was led by Depin Behari Verma, President, District Congress Committee and Chairman, District Board. Salt law was broken in several tahas like Jogapatti, Motibari, Amba, Sugaali, Govindganj, Baxaul and Bettish. In the latter district, salt was manufactured at Serja, Coriskothi and Najpur. Despite the police attempt to foil the movement by taking away the pots and the pans and destroying the hearths, breaking the salt law continued with great enthusiasm throughout the month.

In Patna, the salt satyagraha was inaugurated on 16 April 1930 at Neknas Pind. For violation of the prohibitory order a procession of satyagrahis led by Ambika Kant Sinha, Secretary, District Congress Committee, was obstructed by the police and charged by a European sergeant as a result of which several volunteers received injuries. For continued defiance by staging mass dharna on the road, Ambika Kant Sinha was arrested with nineteen volunteers.

1. The Searchlight, 9 April 1930.
2. The Searchlight, 11 April 1930.
3. The Searchlight, 18 April 1930.
The frequent use of the mounted police to nip the movement in the bud and the atrocities committed by it were condemned in a meeting presided over by Hasan Imam, a leading barrister and an ex-judge of the Calcutta High Court.

In other districts also, the enthusiastic leaders and volunteers carried on the Civil Disobedience Movement peacefully in accordance with the salt programme, unmindful of official reaction and undreaded by arrests, atrocities, fines and imprisonments.

On the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru, hartals were observed in most of the towns, with varying degrees of success, and there was general abstention of students from schools and colleges. Complete success was reported from Bhagalpur. On the arrest of Gandhiji, there were hartals even at the sub-divisional headquarters. In Patna, processions were taken out on 6 May and a large audience was addressed by Rajendra Prasad. Students' participation in strikes and demonstrations was the most conspicuous. Resolutions were passed for boycott of foreign cloth and law courts and picketing of liquor shops. Some speakers invited the police to join the movement. At Birh the municipality, the local board and the co-operative bank were closed. At Muzaffarpur, Champaran, Monghyr, Purulia, Manbad, Hazaribagh, Dumka, Madhupur and many other places hartals, processions and strikes were successful largely due to the active participation of the students. A Swadeshi League, formed at Patna, advanced the cause of khadi and cottage industry.

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2. Ibid.
The provincial government informed the central government on 19 May 1930 that the arrest of Gandhi aroused considerably less excitement than might have been expected.

In the meantime, vigorous house to house propaganda against the use of liquor and foreign cloth was carried on. In less than a fortnight, foreign cloth dealers in several cities and towns like Patna, Monghyr, Panchak, Anasaur, Berbigha, Bikram, Pali, Karmichak and Motihari stopped sale of foreign cloth, and practically all of them got their foreign cloth sealed by the Congress. Similar success attended the propaganda against the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs and the picketing of shops selling them.

Due to the popular response to the movement, the sale of boycotted articles was adversely affected all over the province, while in Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Purulia, Patoria, Madhubani, Nawada, Hajipur, and Muzaffinagar, it was almost at a standstill.

The government geared itself to meet the situation. Police activities became vigorous, arrests of political figures indiscriminate and repression intense. In the initial stage of the movement, the arrested persons were awarded short-term simple imprisonment in most cases. The imprisonment became vigorous from May onwards. A person of the position of Sri Krishna Sinha, leader of the Congress party in the Council and Secretary, Bihar Provincial Congress Committee, was seen handcuffed with one of his co-workers

1. Ibid.
2. Young India, 12 June 1930.
3. Ibid.
while being removed from one jail to another. Other satyagrahis were also similarly treated.

The impact of the movement in Bihar was quite impressive. Government revenue from excise shrank considerably. As a consequence of the boycott of the use of cigarettes, the Imperial Tobacco Company of India had to close down its factory at Monghyr, causing unemployment to about four thousand persons and financial loss to itself.

Charh was in greater vogue. Takli was popularised and people in large numbers took to spinning to promote the cause of swadeshi. At Barhia, tailors refused to sew foreign cloth. Many cloth merchants voluntarily agreed not to import foreign cloth in future and bound themselves to pay a fine from Rs.100/- to Rs.1,000/- and, if necessary, to undergo social boycott for breach of promise. They signed declarations to sell products of mills certified as swadeshi by the Congress.

Besides, caste panchayats and village sabhas helped the movement. In their meetings, resolutions for boycotting of foreign cloth, British goods and intoxicating drugs were adopted and the constructive programme of the movement was carried out very successfully.

The district-wise break up of the arrests made by the end of May was as follows: Patna 21, Ranchi 6, Champaran 201, Seran 48, Muzaffarpur 25, Darbhanga 4, Bhagalpur 39, Hazaribagh 6, Manbhum 9,

1. Young India, 8 May 1930.
3. AICC Papers, 6-80, 1930; and Young India, 29 May 1930.
Gaya 21, Sheohar 13, Monghyr 14, Santal-parganas 4 and
Purnia 18.

The Governor of Bihar and Orissa expressed much anxiety
in his address to the members of the provincial Legislative Council,
'A great cloud is rolling over the country and forces have been
let loose which are endangering the very foundations of our
society.... A man may easily push a boulder from the top of a
hill, but once it has gathered momentum, it is quite beyond his
power to stop it.... The message which the Congress party preaches
is contempt for law and revolution against established Government....
Where laws are broken, each man becomes a law unto himself....'

Rajendra Prasad was the guiding spirit of the movement
all over Bihar. His arrest at Chapra on 5 July 1930 while on tour
and imprisonment for six months in the Hazaribagh jail gave fresh
impetus to the movement. Deep Narayan Singh of Bhagalpur whom he
had selected as his successor began touring the province
immediately.

In June 1930, there was a violent lathi charge on the
satyagrahis at Bhagalpur, an important junction on the Bengal and
North-Western Railways in Bhagalpur district. Since the beginning
of the Civil Disobedience Movement, this place had become a centre
of Congress activity. It was visited more than once by the
provincial leaders. It had a kni diaspora, maintained by the Charkha
Sangha and an ashram for the use of the Congress Working Committee.

1. Young India, 12 June 1930.
2. Debates, Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, 1-8 July 1930,
   Vol. XXII, pp. 15 ff.
4. Home Pol. File 31/6, 1931; The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 5 June
   and 9 June 1930; and Young India, 12 June and 19 June 1930.
During the course of this movement, the provincial leaders visited it more than once. Salt was freely manufactured and several leaders like Kallidas Bihari Lal, President, District Congress Committee, Mahadeva Shroff, MLC and Syed Sahabuddin were arrested. The government sources alleged that the ashram had developed into a regular camp on semi-military lines with formal parades held twice daily and ostentatious practice of fighting with lathi and daggers. Volunteers were recruited in considerable numbers and were regularly sent in batches to picket liquor and ganja shops in the bazaar. On 1 June a European officer accompanied by some constables reached those shops and asked the volunteers to go away. On their refusal they were beaten and the national flag they were carrying was snatched and burnt. About half a dozen other volunteers who rushed to the scene from the nearby Congress office were also beaten, but they remained undaunted and succeeded in taking away some of the burnt parts of the flag. After this incident the police surrounded the Congress office, the Charkha Sangha and the Khadi depot and forcefully occupied them. Their inmates and workers were driven out by force. The lock of the Charkha Sangha was broken and charkhas, yarn, cotton, some khadi pieces, and cash box together with the personal belongings of the workers were thrown into ditches causing loss and unemployment to the innocent workers.

1. Ibid.
3. Young India, 19 June 1930.
4. Ibid.
Deprived of the important centre of political and constructive activities, the Congress sent jatthas every day with instructions to proceed to reoccupy those premises in a non-violent manner and court arrest and repression in the process. For five days the volunteers were mercilessly beaten until some of them became unconscious. On 7 June the volunteers who went in jatthas were not beaten but bound hand and foot and left lying on the ground, while the police under a European police officer attacked the crowd accompanying them and beat them indiscriminately. Persons wearing khaddar were not allowed to enter the bazaar or go along the public roads leading to the Congress house.

At Manbhum mounted Pathan severs and armed Gorkhas on patrol duty arrested volunteers picketing liquor shops and caused panic and terror in the town. Columns of military police sent to the villages to threaten the rural folk used physical violence. Till the end of June, the districts of Bhagalpur, Santal Parganas and Manbhum were subjected to such violent police activities. But this type of intimidation could not stop picketing. As soon as some batches of volunteers were arrested, fresh ones took their places. Women picketers also appeared on the scene.

No tax campaign also spread in many towns of Bihar. Chautkari tax was not paid in Champaran, Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Patna, Darbhanga, Purulia, Sultanganj, Musaffarpur and Manbhum. The Governor of Bihar and Orissa reported to the Viceroy on 2 June 1930, 'The chautkari tax movement has started on a small scale.

1. Ibid.
in several districts and is the most dangerous; the tax is unpopular and the refusal to pay appeals to everyone. Champanar took the leading part in it. At several places, chaukiders submitted resignations en masse. At village Gauripur, in Bhagalpur district, people refused to pay the chaukidari tax and even the presence of the superintendent of police did not have any effect. In the same village, the horse of Ramanadi Singh, worth Rs. 200/- was seized and auctioned for Rs. 20/- to one Kizamat Khan in lieu of a tax of Rs. 6/-. Similarly, for an arrear of Rs. 2/- due from Kalroc Sahu, his five she-buffaloes worth Rs. 100/- each were seized. An old man of seventy was given a severe blow with a lathi. A cash box of Ramjiwan Thakur was broken open and Rs. 200/- were taken away. Two carpets worth Rs. 18/-, one lota worth Rs. 2/- and one gaatra worth Rs. 3/- were also taken away.

Besides, Sugauli, Govindganj Meha, Jogapatti and Majhaulia were greatly affected. In Sugauli there five villages stopped paying the tax as a result of which moveable property of several villagers were seized and put to auction. As there were no local bidders, the properties were sold only to chaukiders of the area. In Majhaulia the people of Amwan were taken to task for stopping payment of chaukidari tax. Sixteen persons were arrested and beaten severely.

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
In the districts of Saran and Sheohar, the police made a clean sweep of all the political workers. Bulk of the arrests were made for picketing of shops, non-payment of chakidarri tax, reading cyclostyledเจ้หน้าที่เจ้าหน้าที่, harbouring volunteers and helping the movement.

In other districts also more or less similar phase of the no-tax campaign and the countering activities of the government were witnessed. Everywhere seizure of property and assaults and arrests were the most common features. Amongst the articles confiscated were generally foodgrain, ornaments, utensils, domestic animals and implements. While ransacking the houses, the earthen utensils were generally broken, grains were strewn all sides and householders were beaten.

The women of the province did not lag behind in contributing their mite to the Civil Disobedience Movement. The lead in this respect was given mostly by the middle class educated women in cities and towns. Indeed, for sometime past, awakening amongst them had been noticed. In January 1929 was held a session of the All-India Women's Conference at Patna during which they had the opportunity of meeting their sisters from other parts of India to deliberate on the ways and means of attaining self-government and freedom. Several women delegates had attended the All-India Women's Conference on social and educational reforms in Bombay on 20 January 1930. Many women came out of purdah and made an enthusiastic response to Gandhiji's call to join the Civil Disobedience Movement and help the national cause. He asked them to

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participate in the activities for the boycott of foreign cloth, prevention of the sale of intoxicants and furtherance of the constructive programme of Khadi production by 'devoting every available minute to the spinning of yarn.'

At Patna, the success which attended the picketing of foreign cloth was largely due to the efforts of women volunteers. A number of ladies, headed by Mrs. Hasan Imam, went through the streets of Patna urging the shop-keepers not to deal in foreign cloth. Smt. Vindhyavasini Devi, another woman leader, also took a prominent part in that work. At Sasaram, Smt. Ram Babu led a party of lady volunteers and manufactured salt in front of the police station. Smt. Mira Devi was arrested at Hazaribagh for picketing a liquor shop.

Mrs. Hasan Imam addressed several meetings of students at Patna. Together with her daughter, Mrs. Sani, Mrs. C.C. Das and some other women, she organised a procession of women at Patna on 15 July 1930 to inaugurate an intensive campaign of boycott of British goods. During the week ending 25 July Patna witnessed two demonstrations in which nearly 3,000 women took part.

Mrs. Hasan Imam, Mrs. Sani, Mrs. C.C. Das, Miss Gauri Das and Smt. Vindhyavasini Devi were summoned to court under Section 30 of the Police Act and Section 143 of the Indian Penal Code. Mrs. Imam was fined Rs. 250/- and the others Rs. 100/- each. Before her arrest, Mrs. Imam formed a committee of women at Ruzaffarpur to

1. Young India, 10 April 1930.
2. The Searchlight, 9 April 1930.
3. AICC Papers, File G-60, 1930.
propagate spinning and advance the cause of Khadi. Mirabehn toured Bihar to popularize the use of charkha. Women leaders also advocated non-payment of chaukdiari tax.

They carried on propaganda against intoxicating drugs, liquor and toddy so vigorously that their sale was considerably reduced throughout the province and at several places it was almost at a standstill. The special feature of the boycott of toddy was that in many districts thousands of palm trees were rendered incapable of giving toddy juice when their 'ears' were cut off, in most cases voluntarily by the owners of the trees themselves on the call of Gandhiji.

Like other provinces, press in Bihar could not escape the fury and drastic legal action of the government. The targets for such action were the nationalist newspapers, pamphlets and news-sheets in regional languages. As a result of these strict measures, many publications in the province were badly affected and several of them ceased publication. On 27 April 1930, the Viceroy promulgated an Ordinance reviving the Press Act of 1910. As a protest against it, the newspapers of Bihar, viz. the Searchligh, the Desh, the Mahavir and the Lokaasamvadha stopped publication instead of depositing security. Those that continued publication such as five presses in Bihar were asked to deposit security.

2. Young India, 15 May 1930.
On 2 July 1930, the Government of India promulgated another ordinance under the title of Unauthorised News-sheets and Newspapers Ordinance, to 'make provision for the control of unauthorised news-sheets and newspapers'. This engine of repression was applied against Desh Ki Pukar, Yubak Rashtriya Gita Sangraha (a collection of national songs), Gerib Minhustan (a pamphlet in Urdu), Swadeshoddhar Ki Kunj, Rashtriya Jankar, Rashtriya Geet Sangraha, Swatantra Ki Pukar, Azadi Ki Hunkar (all Hindi pamphlets), Swatantra Ka Bigul, a book containing poems in Hindi and Rashtriya Jankar Aur Swaraj Ka Jhanda — a book in Hindi.

The treatment meted out by the jail authorities to the political prisoners in the jails of Bihar was hard and vigorous. Insanity of accommodation, confinement in cells, supply of unhygienic and bad food and occasional infliction of corporal punishments were common features in all jails. According to the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee Report, 'overcrowding, assault and ill-treatment, particularly of 'C' class political prisoners, bad food and other hardships had become common the majority of the sub-jails, converted into regular district jails and political prisoners very much in excess of the number provided for were lodged there.

In Arreh sub-jail where there was room only for about two hundred, the number of political prisoners exceeded four hundred. In Gaya jail the satyagrahis resorted to hunger strike. In some cases political prisoners were assaulted, abused and given

2. AICC Papers. File G-80, 1930.
cellular punishment. Food served was very inferior in quality. Worms were often found in boiled rice.

The political prisoners were asked to stop praying in the evening. They were often kicked with boots and directed to salute the superintendent. On their refusal to do so they were boxed on the nose, spat on the face and their hair were plucked. In some jails the superintendent stood on the prostrate bodies of the satyagrahis till they became unconscious.

Every effort was made to crush the movement. The ordinances promulgated were enforced with vigour. The police assaulted and their atrocities assumed diverse forms. Political leaders, volunteers and their sympathisers were arrested in large numbers. Only prominent leaders and influential workers were convicted, fined and imprisoned in jails. Other participants in the movement such as volunteers, sympathisers, helpers and onlookers were generally released after physical assault or corporal punishment and small fines. For realization of fines, properties were attached and auctioned. At several places the police ransacked the houses, broke open the kothis and took away whatever belongings they liked. This had a demoralising effect on the family of the persons arrested as well as on the local population. The imposition of collective fines on villages and localities for recalcitrance and the mode of their realization from the inhabitants of those places were intended to create awe among the people. Shooting was also tried as a technique of punishment.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
but only on a small scale, just in a few places, with little or no effect. At places people faced bullets regardless of any fear. The existing jails being overful with political prisoners, new ones were opened temporarily.

Apart from the direct action of government in putting people in jail and assaulting them with lathis for organised breaches of specific laws the police started a campaign of false prosecutions and terrorisation. Persons entrenching the satyagrahis or giving shelter to them were interrogated, prosecuted and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. In villages, policemen went about intimidating the people and preventing them from giving food or shelter to Congress volunteers and associating them with the movement in any form. Private village or family funds were taken advantage of and persons were encouraged to bring false cases against their opponents having sympathy with the Congress causes. At times false cases of rioting and unlawful assembly were cooked up. Persons were instigated to file complaints against volunteers for kidnapping minor boys. In such cases, sentences passed were always more than two years with heavy fines. By these low devices and unscrupulous ways the government might have created fear but could not earn respect in this country.

The government did its worst and with vengeance to crush the Congress committees and volunteer organizations. The police forcibly dispossessed the Congress committees and volunteer organizations of their offices and places from where they functioned.

1. AICC Papers. File 24, 1930.
2. Ibid.
and carried on their activities. If they were not vacated their inmates were mercilessly beaten and dragged out and articles were thrown away or destroyed. This was done thrice at the three Bihpur ashram houses which gave rise to the Bihpur satyagraha.

At Bagha in Champaran and at Lakhisarai in Monghyr, the rented ashrams were unlawfully and forcibly taken possession of by the police and locked up after driving their inmates. The owners of the ashram houses who had either let out these houses on rents or had gifted them away under registered deeds long before, were prosecuted and convicted under Section 157 IPC and sent to jail. Many such prosecutions and convictions were made in the province. Besides these, several Congress Committee offices were searched at Patna and other places in the province.

From the review of the progress of the movement in Bihar made by the Provincial Congress Committee as well as from the contemporary newspapers it appears that the widespread arrests and repression failed to suppress the enthusiasm for the movement and curb the anti-British feelings in the province. The participants in the movement were drawn from all sections and communities of the people. Urban as well as rural sectors responded willingly. The Civil Disobedience programme including its constructive aspects were carried out zealously. Firmness, fearlessness, devotion to duty, cheerful sufferings of hardships and strict adherence to non-violence characterised the attitudes of all the

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1. Ibid.
2. AICC Papers. File C-1, 1930.
3. Ibid.
volunteers. In refreshing contrast to the apathy of the rich landed interests, government servants and the English educated aspirants for administrative jobs, the enthusiasm of the semi-literate and illiterate masses and of the mercantile community in general was very encouraging.

ORISSA

In Orissa, the Civil Disobedience Movement was launched under the leadership of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee. It met at Cuttack on 18 January 1930 to chalk out its course of action and mobilise public enthusiasm in favour of the contemplated movement for complete independence. Independence Day was observed on 26 January in the remote villages. People assembled in hundreds, unfurled the national flag and started national slogans. At Puri, Lingaraj Misra, MLC, Acharya Mariner Das and Pandit Kripasindhu Nato were arrested and convicted under Section 32 of the Police Act.

On 5 April 1930 the first 'regiment' of the civil resisters numbering thirty, led by Copabandhu Chaudhuri and Acharya Mariner Das, was given a send off for Inchiadi - six miles from Belagore. About 12,000 persons assembled there. The next day, the procession went to Mahanadi river ghat. For a month, Inchiadi became a place of pilgrimage. People from far and near came to see the place of action with presents in the shape of food-stuffs for volunteers. Rice, vegetables, ghee and other eatables were

2. Young India, 17 April 1930.
brought in large quantities. The operation of the manufacture of salt was carried on with vigour, volunteers from various districts having flocked there in large numbers. The police used force and broke earthen pots used for boiling brine. They also broke the earthen pots used for cooking rice for volunteers and in one case a responsible officer eased himself in cooking pots of volunteers.

Besides the march to the Balsore sea-coast for breaking the salt law, there were demonstrations in Calcutta and Cuttack in which citizens as well as students participated. By the end of April 1930 in all twenty-one centres were opened along the coastline of the Bay of Bengal, in the district of Balsore, for breach of salt law by the villagers. At all these places, women also participated in the movement and were roughly handled.

At Irun, when 2,600 persons including 700 women were coming back with salt earth, the police charged women with lathi infliction blows on their legs and back. But the women did not surrender their salt earth. Then the policemen started snatching ornaments from their noses and ears and molested some of them. At Kherang, three satyagrahis became senseless in a lathi charge.

At Kherasapur and Athibad, houses of two satyagrahis were set on fire.

The no-tax campaign was another weapon in the armoury of the satyagrahis. It was started by the end of June 1930 on the

1. Ibid.
2. Young India, 24 April 1930.
5. Ibid.
setting of the monsoon when the salt satyagraha was practically closed. Initiated in Union no. IX of the Balasore Police station by the Balasore District Congress Committee on the lines of Bardoli campaign, it soon developed into a provincial campaign under the auspices of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee. The movement took the form of non-payment of the chaukidari tax. Volunteers were trained for the purpose and posted at different centres under the overall charge of Nabha Krishna Choudhury, acting Secretary of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee. The union where the payment of chaukidari tax was stopped consisted of seventy-two villages with a population of about 25,000 people. This caused alarm in government circles. After a week of the declaration of the movement, the officials rounded up the satyagraha ashrams all over the district and began arresting their inmates and the prominent leaders associated with them.

On 4 July the most important ashram at Balasore was raided and volunteers, workers as well as Nabha Krishna Choudhury were arrested. Soon after, the Moshrikh ashram was also raided and inmates were taken into custody. Similar raids were made on mofussil ashrams. This exasperated the government and led to the adoption of terror tactics to prevent the movement from spreading further. Parties of policemen were let loose into the interiors of the union terrorizing the people by indiscriminate assaulting and looting. One Deputy Magistrate, P. Patro, with two sub-inspectors and twenty-one constables attacked village Kesharpur and demanded the chaukidari tax. The villagers having refused to

Ibid.
pay were attacked. Their houses were raided and looted. For a paltry tax of one rupee and eight annas three hundred rupees in cash and other moveables were taken away by the party from one of the houses. Almost every house was raided and cash and other moveables were taken away forcibly. Some ladies had to part with their ornaments.

On 24 July 1930 a village named Copinathpur was raided and a satyagrahi leader Nagadev Bhuyan was arrested. All his moveables including paddy pots and even torn rags were taken away. In Potagao, people were arrested and looting was a common scene.

The atrocities committed by the Balasore police at village Srirang in July 1930 stand out prominently in the history of the struggle in the province. Lawlessness was let loose for several days in that village and the villagers left their homes in terror. The value of the things and cash looted was one lakh of rupees. Three women of the village were subjected to rape, places of worship were defiled and punitive police was posted at Srirang and the neighbouring villages.

The situation did not improve by terrorism. The campaign against payment of chauthari tax spread to Cuttack and Puri districts and arbitration panchayats and parallel police establishments were started at Tundra, Inchudi and Kusarpur in the Balasore district. To counter these activities, the government started anti-Congress associations at different places in the district of Cuttack.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Some prominent women leaders like Malati Devi, Ramadevi and Kumudini Desgupta played significant role in salt satyagraha and also in picketing the foreign cloth shops. They manufactured salt with other ladies and sold it at fancy prices. By their passionate appeals, they could induce the merchants to sign a pledge not to indent foreign cloth for ever. After taking this pledge, then some of them received foreign piece-goods indented by them earlier, the coolies and cartmen of the town were persuaded not to extend their co-operation to them in the unloading of bales from the railway wagons and carrying them to their shops. The effective pressure on cloth merchants led them to come to a definite written compromise on 17 July 1930 by which the merchants agreed to store the bales of foreign piece-goods in their godowns under Congress seal and the owners' locks for three months from the date of agreement and undertook to sell only goods produced by the Indian mills.

The government took drastic measures against the press which supported the cause of Civil Disobedience Movement. In the Utkal region, heavy securities were demanded from the editor of the Samaj, the most influential organ of the province, founded by Pandit Gopabandhu Das. The paper ceased publication from 16 May 1930. Similarly, Prajatendra, a weekly Congress organ of Balesore was asked to furnish security and ceased publication from 8 May. The keepers of Satyabadi and Lokseva presses of Cuttack and the Prajatendra press, Balesore, were asked to furnish

1. Young India, 8 May 1930.
2. AICC Papers, File 24, 1930.
security or close their printing establishments. Besides, *Utkal Sevak*, a vernacular weekly of Sambalpur, ceased publication.

The treatment meted out to political prisoners in the jails of Orissa was most deplorable, harsh and unhygienic. In Cuttack the jail authorities did their worst to make the satyagrahi prisoners attend the convicts' parade and do 'sarker salam'. On their refusal to comply they had to undergo several kinds of punishments including beating, handcuffing and solitary confinement. The food supplied to them was far below the standard allowed by the jail code. The daily ration given to each prisoner cost the authorities, according to their own computation, two annas daily. In Balesore jail the treatment was particularly bad. Assaults and insults were common things. On one occasion, several young satyagrahis were so brutally beaten that they became unconscious.

Towards the end of 1930, most of the 'C' class political prisoners of Orissa were transferred to the Patna camp jail which had become notorious for its bad treatment. Besides bad food and worse housing, satyagrahis were not even allowed to say their morning and evening prayers. They resented it and resorted to satyagraha to win this right for all the political prisoners in the jail.

The Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam followed the pattern of all India movement involving defiance of laws and ordinances and boycott of British goods. In the second week of March 1930, the Provincial Congress Committee passed resolutions for the enrolment of volunteers and organisation of the satyagraha campaign. People and students were invited to participate in the ensuing movement.

When Gandhiji began the salt satyagraha in April 1930 after the historic Dandi march, the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam was conducted under the leadership of Bishun Prasad. He was assisted by the Congress leaders like Hem Chandra Barua, Omed Kumar Das, Siddinath Sarma, Harendra Chandra Chowdhury and many others including the youth leaders of the province.

The Congress endeavoured to enhance its influence in the rural areas through the ryotas' associations i.e. sabhas, organised for the purpose, as political organisations, subscribing to the ideals of the Indian National Congress. For example, the opening of the Chariduar Ryot Sabha at Darrang was attended by a parade of volunteers and the hoisting of the national flag with shouts of Gandhiji-Ki-Jai. The ryot sabha movement made most headway in the districts where land revenue had come under reassessment and especially in Darrang district. The Congress volunteers could easily foster the idea that it was to the Congress that the people

must look for the improvement of their condition and for the lightening of their unbearable economic burdens by the reduction of the land revenue or the abolition of taxes like the cart tax.

In the first week of April 1930, there were numerous meetings and processions in Sylhet district. At these meetings, the most prominent speaker was Babu Brojendra Narayan Chaudhri, an ex-MLC. He was an outstanding advocate of the Civil Disobedience Movement in the Assam province.

On 15 April there was a general hartal at Sylhet on account of the arrest of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Murshidabad College was boycotted by students, but the European Principal took firm action. His order expelling twenty-six of the ring leaders was unanimously supported by the managing committee. Similar events took place at all high schools in the district.

The arrest of Babu Brojendra Narayan Chaudhri on 3 May 1930 under Section 124-A sparked off demonstrations on 6 and 7 May and violation of Section 144 Cr.P.C. The police dispersed the demonstrators with the assistance of four platoons of Assam Rifles. In this action, sixteen persons were injured and ten arrested.

Soon after this the news of the arrest of Gandhi Ji created peaceful stir all over the province. 'Peasants retired from their ploughs and workmen from their work'. Everywhere all business,

2. Ibid.
3. The Governor of Assam was much worried about the political activities of Brojendra Narayan Chaudhri in the Sylhet Valley. (Halifax Papers. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, 1 May 1930)
trade and commerce were suspended; schools were emptied and lawyers did not attend courts. There was spontaneous hartal in every nook and corner of the province. In Tespur, about 400 mandals i.e. government survey clerks came out of their offices and joined the hartal. Students felt very much agitated. Many women came out of their seclusion. Monster processions and mass meetings were held everywhere. Foreign goods were boycotted. Sale of cigarettes was practically stopped. The Imperial Tobacco Company which had an enormous sale of several lakhs in the past desperately wrote to the President, Assam Provincial Congress Committee, 'weekly pleading that their cigarettes are made in India out of Indian tobacco and by Indian hands and seeking exclusion from the British goods boycott.' Sale of ganja shared the same fate. In some places, social boycott of opium-eaters was organised as sale of opium was a government monopoly.

On 29 May 1930 the police searched the Congress office, the Tarun Sangha office and the house of Babu Hirendra Nath Deb, Secretary of the Sylhet Congress Committee. Subsequently, he was arrested.

The boycott of foreign cloth met with remarkable success throughout the province. Spinning received impetus unknown before. Every Assamese home had its loom. The sale of foreign yarn and cloth in the villages became well-nigh impossible. Enthusiasm

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. The Samita Bara Patrika, 30 May 1930.
reached such a pitch that even the sale of *swadeshi* mill yarn was not permitted. Demand for cotton increased.

The Assam Provincial Congress Committee adopted a policy of 'production and reduction'. People were advised to produce as much Khadi as possible and not to purchase any cloth but Khadi until the Mahatma was released. Curtailment of the quantity of cloth used was also urged.

The prohibition work went on equally well. Villagers took up temperance work with zeal. In certain parts of the province, social boycott of persons who opposed the prohibition programme of the Congress was resorted to. As a result of it, cigarettes and ganja were almost eradicated from the province. Opium and liquor were also affected. The Governor of Assam expressed his anxiety about the movement in a telegram to the Viceroy on 13 June 1930, '...there is a good deal of propaganda and picketing going on in the villages.... Women are also taking a part.'

The President and members of the Assam FCC toured various districts and the district leaders held numerous meetings in the villages. Thus all sections of people irrespective of classes and communities were involved in the movement. Lekhmani Kant Barua, MLC, resigned his seat in the council as a protest against

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
the repressive policy of the government. Even the government
servants sympathised with the movement. To counteract this trend,
the Chief Secretary, Assam Government, issued a circular to the
divisional and district officers on 18 June 1930 directing them
to warn the government servants of serious consequences by way
of disciplinary action against them, if they cooperated with any
satyagrahi or indulged in any kind of anti-government activity.

A case of insults and injuries on the satyagrahis was
reported on 11 May 1930, when twelve volunteers were returning
to the town from the mofussil marching in a procession and singing
national songs. When they reached the European Club, the Deputy
Commissioner and other Europeans, most of them tea-planters,
rushed out of the club with tennis rackets in their hands and
dealt blows on the volunteers who stood there unperturbed.

In Dhubri all houses were searched on the plea that some
Chittagong insurgents had taken refuge in the town. Even the
houses of high officials could not escape the search. A peaceful
meeting of the students was dispersed by force. As a result of it,
twenty-nine students were injured. Lathis were directed against
the lower limbs, testicles, kidneys, abdomen etc. Two persons
were arrested at Dhubri. From Nowgong Baladhar Bhuyan, Secretary,
DCC, was arrested and sentenced to two months simple imprisonment.
The Secretary, AICC, congratulated him on this prosecution and
hoped that like the rest of the country Assam would also contribute
to the success of the good fight.

1. Ibid.
2. The emrite Bazar Patrika, 20 June 1930.
3. Report of the President, DCC, Sylhet in Young India, 5 June
   1930.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
The Congress volunteers launched campaign against the payment of the chaukidiari tax and their activities in this regard were mainly in operation in the Surma Valley. The villagers in Sylhet district were advised not to pay the chaukidiari tax to the government authorities. The position became worse in the Sunamganj sub-division of the district where some chaukidiars were persuaded to resign. They were garlanded and decorated with Gandhi caps so that the ignorant villagers began to believe that the Gandhi Raj had arrived. Similar attempts in connection with the non-payment of chaukidiari tax were made by the volunteers in south Sylhet and the Sylhet Congress League got the forms filled up and signed by those who showed willingness to stop payment of chaukidiari tax.

The government sources alleged that efforts were also made by Congress workers to spread discontent among the tea garden coolies who were of course the 'most inflammable material' for agitation in this province. In the Lakhimpur district, at Doom Dooma, the biggest centre of tea gardens in Assam, volunteers picketing liquor shops were reported to have told garden coolies that their wages would be raised from Rs. 12/- to Rs. 22/- a month, if they stopped drinking for at least three months and that it was due to Gandhiji that their wages had been raised earlier from Rs. 6/- to Rs. 7/-.

At Silchar, when the Congress volunteers commenced picketing ganja shops on 25 July 1930, the police armed with lathis appeared on the scene and ordered the picketers to disperse.

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
On their refusal to comply the police snatched away their Gandhi caps and resorted to baton charge. On hearing this hundreds of people from different parts of the town at once ran to the spot and the district authorities sent reinforcement to the aid of the police to meet the situation. The Congress leadership, however, withdrew the latter to avoid trouble.

Unlike Silchar, Sylhet witnessed a severe lathi charge by police, when Shivendra Charan Vishwas, President and Bhirendra Nath Dasgupta, Vice-President of the District Congress Committee, led a procession consisting of five pleaders, some office bearers of the Congress and a number of other satyagrahis pledged to non-violence. Just after the procession started, the Magistrate, Maulvi Tazeenul Ali, declared it illegal and asked the satyagrahis to disperse. But the satyagrahis continued to march. When they proceeded about three furlongs an array of soldiers with bayoneted rifles in hand were seen standing in rows obstructing the street. Shivendra Charan Vishwas was removed from his followers and put under arrest. Then followed a ghastly scene. The European captains with batons and the soldiers with their bayonets fell upon the satyagrahis and began brandishing their weapons freely on the procession till each and every one of the volunteers lay flat on the ground either with his head broken or bones dislocated, and blood cozing out in streams or in a state of unconsciousness. Not satisfied with their atrocities, they hurled kicks

2. For details see the article 'Goonda Raj in Sylhet' in Young India, 5 June 1930.
3. Ibid.
on some of the volunteers lying flat on the ground and trampled over them. But the volunteers did not resist. The President, N.C., reported, 'Not a volunteer moved an inch from the spot he was standing — not one of them showed the slightest sign of weakness — not a tear dropped, not a single cry was heard.'

No arrangement was made for giving first aid to the injured by the government. An ambulance car from the office of the Congress, standing a little behind the scene, removed the injured, some to the Congress office and others to the private houses. Mirendranath Basuota received a severe blow on his face and remained unconscious for fifteen hours. The local ambulance corps composed of the local Tarun Sangha members nursed the wounded.

The government also enforced strict measures to foil the efforts of the Congress volunteers picketing excise shops and bazaars in Silsagar and Nowgong. Special constabulary was posted there which ruthlessly harassed the non-violent picketers.

Like other provinces, press was gagged in Assam also by a government ordinance. Assam pry, the only nationalist vernacular paper, having a wide circulation in the villages, was required to furnish a security of Rs.2,000/- and the Congress Bulletin of Sylhet had to give a security of Rs.1,000/-. The students contributed a great deal to the success of the satyagraha in Assam. They took part in bartaalas, political

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
4. Young India, 23 May 1930.
5. The Bombay Chronicle, 11 June 1930.
demonstrations and the Congress propaganda. The government, therefore, contemplated measures to tighten their hold over the educational institutions in order to arrest the movement and keep the students under control. In May 1930, J.R. Cunningham, the Director of Public Instructions, issued a circular requiring students, their parents and guardians to give an undertaking in writing that their sons and wards would 'refrain from participation of any kind in political activities, e.g., by way of hartals, school strikes, attendance at political meetings, picketing and the like, and that they will respect and abide by the disciplinary rules and orders of the school authority and the Education Department.'

This circular was publicly denounced in political meetings held all over Assam. The government of Assam admitted that numerous indignation meetings were held in all the plain districts protesting against a recent circular issued by the D PI under the authority of government. The students in general refused to be humiliated by such a promulgation by an alien government, for they had become conscious of their self-respect as well as of national honour.

As a protest against the official restrictions on the government educational institutions, a number of schools on the model of Kemrup Academy at Gauhati were started by the public at

1. ALLC Papers. File G-94(1); File G-145, 1930; Young India, 12 June 1930; and Calcutta Papers. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, 12 June 1930.
3. Young India, 12 June 1930.
various places such as Tezpur, Dibrugarh and Barpeta. They were filled up at once by a vast number of students who had refused to give undertaking in the government and government-sided schools. Consequently, the circular was relaxed and it was made possible for the students to re-enter those schools. But the national school continued functioning as a protest against an invidious circular intended to cripple the movement for swaraj in Assam.

The policy towards the centres of higher learning was no better. The Principal of the Cotton College, Guwahati, issued a circular asking the students to refrain from participating in any 'undesirable' political movement and threatening drastic action against those found guilty of violating the circular. Students whose names were reported by the police were to be debarred from securing any government employment, scholarships, free-studentships or any favour whatsoever.

T.R. Phukan, an MLA, and President of the Assam Youth League greatly influenced the student community to obtain its participation in the movement. To counter his influence the Principals of the colleges, under instructions from government, informed students that those taking part in the political agitation would not be allowed to appear before a selection board for any appointment. This action had been rendered necessary by the objectionable activities of some students, notably one Dwarka Nath Goswami, who had formed a new body named the Socialist Youth Conference.

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Two student workers, Liladhar Barua and Bednanda Sarma were arrested at Tezpur for leading a procession which was dispersed by police. Both of them were sentenced to two months rigorous imprisonment. "It was a most ridiculous sight to see full grown police men armed with regulation sticks and batons chasing young school boys in the procession and tussling with them for the national flag."

Women of Assam also came out of their seclusion to participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement. At Dhubri members of several social organizations such as the Dhubri Mahila Samiti and the Chhatri Sangha i.e. the Lady Students' Union met at a common platform on 14 April 1930 to protest against the arrest of J. N. Sen Gupta in Bengal. Two prominent ladies, Chandraprova Selikani and Durgeshova Borah came forward to take part in the picketing before the Cotton College.

The number of political prisoners in the jails of Assam by 15 November 1930 was 415 including 4 Muslims. Out of them, 413 were males, 2 females and 44 juveniles under seventeen. "C" class prisoners were not allowed the facility of newspapers.

As a protest against the worst conditions in jails and the uncalled for rules and regulations, strictly enforced by the jail authorities, the satyagrahis resorted to hunger-strikes in a non-violent way in the jails of Gauhati, Howgong and Sylhet in

3. Ibid. and Halifax Papers. Governor of Assam to Viceroy, 1 May 1930.
September 1930. In Sylhet 130 political prisoners went on hunger-strike as a protest against certain punishments inflicted on them by the jail superintendent, the charge being the violation of jail discipline. At Howgong, however, the hunger-strike was started as a protest against the orders of the government refusing to allow any political prisoner to celebrate the Durga Puja inside the jails. This kind of enforced discipline by the jail authorities severely hurt the religious susceptibility of volunteers who could pay any price for it in a non-violent way.

In Sylhet a prominent Congress leader, Harendra Chandra, agitated for the abolition of capitalism and the seminary system and a District Peasants' and Ryots' Conference was formed for the purpose. For rendering social service, an Assam branch of the Sevadal was formed and a training camp opened at Howgong towards the end of 1930. Work on temperance and boycott of British goods were continued throughout the province. The Sylhet leader, Brojendra Narayan Choudhuri, advocated the social boycott of all government servants as a means of bringing the government to its knees. He publicly declared that he had no faith in the government officers especially those in the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police Service. At Chaparmukh in Howgong an attempt was made to set up a parallel administration for the trial of civil and criminal cases.

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