

Peregrination of a Half-Naked Fakir in the Shoulder of Wisdom, Truth, and foresight

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ABSTRACT: The ‘Salt March’, also known as the Salt Satyagraha, Dandi March and, the Dandi Satyagraha, was an act of nonviolent civil disobedience in colonial India led by Mahatma Gandhi. It was a part of Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violent protest towards the British monopoly on making salt. The twenty-four-day march lasted from 12th March 1930 to 6th April 1930 as a direct-action campaign of tax resistance and non-violent protest towards the British salt monopoly. The march spanned 240 miles from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, which was called ‘Navasari’ at that time. Growing numbers of Indians joined them along the way. When Gandhi broke the British Raj salt laws at 6.30 am on 6th April 1930, it sparked large-scale acts of civil disobedience against the salt laws by millions of Indians. The event after the Dandi march certainly brought the colonial rulers under pressure. Through this movement, Mahatma Gandhi once again revealed the power of truth and non-violence to the world. The Father of the Nation used to address the gathering during the march. His speeches were successful in influencing the minds of the people against the policies of the British. During the march, it was undoubtedly spelled out that the people should keep their attention focused on the salt law itself, and at the same time, it was ensured that civil disobedience was not resorted to before Gandhiji broke the salt law at Dandi. Gandhiji had noticeably sent across the message that the Swaraj cannot be sustained without sacrifices to achieve it. A true sacrifice is one in which one side suffers without resorting to retaliation. The Congress Working Committee decided to end the satyagraha only in 1934. Even though it did not immediately lead to salt rule or dominion status, the salt satyagraha did have some prolonged effects. The British also realized the control over India now depended completely on the consent of the Indians. The historic Dandi march that began on March 12, 1930, played a significant role in India’s freedom struggle as it was the most influential and inspirational moment in the fight for independence. The journey of India will now be defined by self-reliance and self-respect. We will no more be seekers and our image on the world canvas will be that of a contributor and the message which Gandhiji conveyed 91 years back of the “Swadeshi Movement” is now reimplemented as the “Make in India” movement. This is the reason why the day marking the beginning of the Dandi march was chosen to launch the celebrations surrounding 75 years of India’s Independence. The events after the Dandi Yatra certainly brought the colonial rulers under pressure. Through this movement, Mahatma Gandhi once again introduced the power of truth and non-violence to the world.

KEYWORDS: dandi march, nonviolence, struggle-truce-struggle, disobedience movement, swadeshi movement, salt march

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I. The Gandhian Ideology

The outlook of his parents’ socio-religious milieu values of Vaishnavism. Texts like Bhagavat Gita, and Jainism shaped early thoughts. Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount, Tolstoy, and Ruskin are influenced by Gandhiji. These are the important factors or ingredients in the making of the Gandhian ideology of the beginning. Gandhian ideology is the set of religious and social ideas adopted and developed by Mahatma Gandhi, first during his period in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and later in India. Gandhian philosophy is not only simultaneously political, moral, and religious; it is also traditional and modern, simple, and complex. It embodies numerous Western influences on which Gandhiji was exposed but is rooted in ancient Indian culture harnessing universal moral & religious principles. Gandhian ideology emphasizes not idealism, but practical idealism. Gandhian philosophy is a double-edged weapon. Its objective is to transform the individual and society simultaneously, following the principles of truth and non-violence. Truth and nonviolence are the twin cardinal principles of Gandhian thoughts. According to him, democracy provided the weak with the same chance as the strong. Truth, nonviolence, Sarvodaya, and Satyagraha and their significance constitute Gandhian philosophy and are the four pillars of Gandhian thought. Gandhiji was a man of action. His own experiences in life shaped his ideology.

II. Satyagraha

Satyagraha is an ideology or tactic that evolved in South Africa and is a particular form of non-violent resistance or civil resistance based on truth and non-violence. The word satyagraha is formed from the Sanskrit words "satya: "truth", āgraha: "insistence" or "holding firmly to". Mahatma Gandhi chose the 1882 British Salt Act as the first target of satyagraha. A person who practices the policy of satyagraha is a Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi always remains truthful, non-violent, and fearless. He should be ready to accept suffering in his struggle against the evildoer. Satyagrahi should love the evildoer. A Satyagrahi should not hate anybody. He should never bow before evil. Only the brave and the strong could practice Satyagraha. Thought should never be separated from practice. Satyagraha was not merely a political tactic but part of a total philosophy of life and ideology. Search for truth was the goal of human life. He also said violence to a cowardly surrender to injustice. This seemed to be a deviation. But this confirmed his practical and political wisdom. In 1918 Gandhiji campaigned for military recruitment to help British war efforts. Satyagraha could assume various forms of fasting, non-violent picketing, non-cooperation, civil disobedience expecting legal penalty. This ideology helped Gandhiji to bring the different classes of and sections of India into the national struggle.

III. Religion

His attitude towards religion was an important aspect of his ideology. Religion for Gandhiji was not a doctrinal formulation of any religious system, but a basic truth underlying all formal religions. For Gandhiji religion was a struggle towards truth.

Hindu Swaraj: In the book Swaraj, we get a glimpse of his ideology. He said the real enemy was not British political domination but the modern western civilization. He tried to uphold the Indian heritage. It is to be noted that there are many inner contradictions. Gandhiji was not a superhuman. He was very much willing to admit his lapses and blunders.

Swadeshi: Swadeshi meant 'of one's own country' – aimed at self-reliance – his solution for the poverty of peasants – was not hostile to emerging industries in India. Gandhiji had to close relations with industrialists like Ambalal Sarabhai; it is evident that he had a distrust of conflict in the notion of class interests.

IV. Struggle Truce Struggle

Gandhiji is quite well known for the mass movements and equally infamous for withdrawing them when they are at their peak. His political strategy was based on the tactic of struggle-truce-struggle. It is nothing but launching a moment and call off it and again launching another movement. He was a practical politician. According to Gandhi's Struggle-Truce-Struggle strategy (STS), mass movements have an inherent tendency to ebb after reaching a certain height, that the capacity of masses to withstand repression, endure suffering and make sacrifices is not unlimited, that a time comes when breathing space is required to consolidate, recuperate, and gather strength for the next round of struggle. During his experience in South Africa, Gandhiji understood that people have limited capacity to withstand a movement. The truce period, it was argued, would enable the masses to recoup their strength to fight and give the Government a chance to respond to the demands of the nationalists. The masses could not go on sacrificing indefinitely. The STS strategy proved to be a novel method of political action, a technique that revolutionized Indian politics and galvanized millions to action against the British Raj. Its success is visible in various movements like Champran Satyagraha, Ahmadabad Workers strike, Kheda Satyagraha where efforts of Gandhiji on the lines of Satyagraha yielded results in the form of passage of Acts and compromise between the parties involved. He knew well that no struggle be sustained for long. No struggle can be sustained in violent mode.

V. Salt March

The 'Salt March', also known as the Salt Satyagraha, Dandi March, and the Dandi Satyagraha, was an act of nonviolent civil disobedience in colonial India led by Mahatma Gandhi. It was a part of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent protest towards the British monopoly on making salt. The twenty-four-day march lasted from 12th March 1930 to 6th April 1930 as a direct-action campaign of tax resistance and nonviolent protest towards the British salt monopoly. The march spanned 240 miles from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, which was called 'Nava sari' at that time. Growing numbers of Indians joined them along the way. When Gandhi broke the British Raj salt laws at 6.30 am on 6th April 1930, it sparked large-scale acts of civil disobedience against the salt laws by millions of Indians. Although over 60,000 Indians were jailed because of the salt satyagraha, the British did not make immediate major concessions. The satyagraha teachings of Gandhiji and the march to Dandi had a significant influence on American activists Martin Luther King, James Bevel, and others during the civil rights movements for the African Americans and other minority groups in the 1960s. The march was the most significant organized challenge to British authority since the non-cooperation movement of 1920-22, and directly followed the Purna Swaraj declaration of sovereignty and self-rule by the Indian National Congress on

26 January 1930. It gained worldwide attention which gave impetus to the Indian independence movement and started the nationwide civil disobedience movement which continued until 1934.

Gandhi planned to begin civil disobedience with a satyagraha aimed at the British salt tax. The 1882 Salt Act gave the British a monopoly on the collection and manufacture of salt, limiting its handling to government salt deposits and levying a salt tax. Violation of the Salt Act was a criminal offense. Even though salt was freely available for those living in the coastal area, Indians were forced to buy it from the colonial government. Which affected the great majority of Indians, and the poor cannot afford to buy salt. The system of making salt in India had existed since the ancient times and the tradition was carried forward by salt farmers. In Bihar and many other provinces, this work was left to a special community. Gradually, the technique of making salt started to improve, but over time, salt has also turned into a commodity. Mahatma Gandhi tried to unite Hindu and Muslims with the salt satyagraha, for it became a common cause.

The event after the Dandi march certainly brought the colonial rulers under pressure. Through this movement, Mahatma Gandhi once again revealed the power of truth and non-violence to the world. In a letter to Lord Irwin on March 2, 1930, Mahatma Gandhi said that "Politically our position is no better than that of slaves; the roots of our culture have been followed out." He further wrote that "this letter is not intended as a threat. It is just a simple and sacred duty of a Satyagrahi. Therefore, I am sending it through a young English friend who is an advocate of the Indian view, who has full faith in non-violence, and who has been perhaps sent to me for this purpose only by the Almighty." The name of the Mahatma's friend was Reginald Reynolds, who had lived with him in the Sabarmati Ashram and had faith in the Mahatma's philosophy. In the letter to Lord Irwin, Mahatma Gandhi informed him about the decision to break the salt law which Gandhiji, felt was the biggest injustice to the poor.

The Father of the Nation used to address the gathering during the march. His speeches were successful in influencing the minds of the people against the policies of the British. During the march, it was undoubtedly spelled out that the people should keep their attention focused on the salt law itself, and at the same time, it was ensured that civil disobedience was not resorted to before Gandhiji broke the salt law at Dandi. With the permission of Gandhiji, a pledge was written for the Satyagrahis. The letter stated, "I am ready to go to jail and I will be happy to bear whatever hardships and punishments will be meted out to me as part of this movement." On the night of April 4, 1930, the Padayatra entered Dandi. Hundreds of Gandhian Satyagrahis gathered on the Dandi coast in the morning of April 5, wearing khadi. A press briefing was also organized at Dandi. Sarojini Naidu, Abbas Tyabji, Mithuben Petit joined the Dandi march. In his address, Gandhiji gave information about breaking the salt law the next morning. The Mahatma broke the salt law by the simple yet symbolic act of picking up a fistful of salt on the Dandi coast on the morning of April 6. "With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire," said Gandhi while picking up the salt in his hand. "Now that the technical or ceremonial breach of the Salt Law has been committed it is open to anyone who would take the risk of prosecution under the Salt Law to manufacture salt wherever he wishes and wherever it is convenient. My advice is that the workers should everywhere manufacture salt to make use of it and to instruct the villagers to do so," he told a representative of the Free Press. After making salt at Dandi, Gandhi headed to Dharasana salt works and was immediately detained under British law and taken to the Yerwada central prison.

Gandhiji had noticeably sent across the message that the Swaraj cannot be sustained without sacrifices to achieve it. A true sacrifice is one in which one side suffers without resorting to retaliation. Describing the Dandi march, the reporter of the Daily Telegraph, London, Ellis Ashmead Bartlett wrote, "who knew that this event would become historical in the future? No doubt, Gandhiji has emerged as a Mahatma and a divine man in the eyes of crores of Indian today."

This was the supreme turn in India's freedom struggle, which emerged from the Dandi march. People understood that non-cooperation was not just an idea but a well-thought-out plan for resistance to British rule. With Gandhiji's visit to Dandi, a wave of nationalism swept across India. The symbolic Dandi march created a sentiment in favour of freedom among the people. Gandhiji's Dandi march still shows us how to make the right decision in difficult times and highlights the importance of sacrifice to the people.

The illegal manufacture and sale of salt were accompanied by the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor. What started as Salt satyagraha soon grew into mass satyagraha. Forest laws were floated in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and the Central Provinces. Peasants in Gujarat and Bengal refused to pay land and chowkidari taxes. Acts of violence too broke out in Calcutta, Karachi, and Gujarat, but unlike what happened during the non-cooperation movement, Gandhiji refused to suspend the civil disobedience movement this time.

The Congress Working Committee decided to end the satyagraha only in 1934. Even though it did not immediately lead to salt rule or dominion status, the salt satyagraha has some prolonged effects. "Indian British and world opinion recognized the legitimate claims of Gandhi and the Congress for Indian independence," wrote Richard L Johnson, who authored the book, Gandhi's experiments with truth: Essential writings by and about Mahatma Gandhi. Moreover, the British also realized the control over India now depended completely on the consent of the Indians. The historic Dandi march that began on March 12, 1930, played a significant role in India's freedom struggle as it was the most influential and inspirational moment in the fight for independence.

The journey of India will now be defined by self-reliance and self-respect. We will no more be seekers and our image on the world canvas will be that of a contributor and the message which Gandhiji conveyed 91 years back of the “Swadeshi Movement” is now reimplemented as the “Make in India” movement. This is the reason why the day marking the beginning of the Dandi march was chosen to launch the celebrations surrounding 75 years of India’s Independence. The events after the Dandi Yatra certainly brought the colonial rulers under pressure. Through this movement, Mahatma Gandhi once again introduced the power of truth and non-violence to the world.

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