

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT (1930)

Dandi March (12 March-6 April 1930)

Gandhi started his famous march along with 79 followers from Sabaramati Ashram on 20 March 1930 to the small village of Dandi to break the Salt Law. It is also called the 'Salt Satyagraha' or the 'Dandi March'. The Congress leaders and workers had been busy at various levels with the organizational tasks of enrolling volunteers and members, forming Congress Committees at the grass-root level, collecting funds and touring villages and towns to spread nationalistic messages. Preparations for launching the Salt Satyagraha were made, sites chosen, volunteers prepared and the logistics of 'battle' worked out. By the time Gandhi reached Dandi, he had a whole nation aroused and expectant, waiting for the final signal. On reaching the seashore on 6 April 1930, Gandhi broke the Salt Law by picking up salt from the seashore. Through this act, Gandhi set into motion the Civil Disobedience movement, a movement that was to remain unsurpassed in the history of the Indian national movement for the countrywide participation it unleashed. The movement became so powerful that it sparked off patriotism even among the Indian soldiers in the Army. One such example was that of the 18th Royal Garhwali Rifles soldiers who refused to fire at the people in Peshawar, on 25 April 1930.

Imposition of Martial Law

Gandhi was arrested on 5 May 1930. The protest of the people over the arrest was widespread. In many towns, the crowd that spilled out into the streets was so large that the police just withdrew. Another round of boycott of foreign goods followed, provoking a nationwide Civil Disobedience movement in

which women also participated. Soon, thereafter, the British used repressive measures such as mass arrests, lathi-charge, police firing, about 1,00,000 people went to jail. In Sholapur, the textile workers, who dominated the strike along with the residents of the town, went on to attack all symbols of the government authority. They established a virtual parallel government in the city which could only be dislodged with the imposition of martial law after 16 May 1930.

Gandhi's 11-point Ultimatum

Gandhi launched another civil disobedience movement towards achieving the goal of complete independence. In the Beginning, he served an 11-point ultimatum to the authorities which was mainly about the common grievances of the people of India, but did not include the demand for complete independence. Among the 11 demands, two were the demands of the peasants (abolition of salt tax to eradicate the government's salt monopoly and reduction in the land revenue by 50 per cent); three were the demands of the middle class (coastal shipping to be reserved for Indians, adequate protection to the domestic textile industry of India, and checking the deteriorating rupee-sterling exchange ratio); the rest were common grievances-modifications in the working of the Central Intelligence Departments, release of political prisoners, complete-prohibition of intoxicants, 50 per cent reduction in military expenditure, 50 per cent cut in civil administration expenditure, and changes in the Arms Act, thus allowing citizens to bear arms for self-protection).

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