

Dandi March

What was Dandi March?

The Dandi March was a historic moment in the history of the Indian freedom struggle. Salt Satyagrah was an integral part of the Civil Disobedience Movement which was started by the Indian National Congress in the year 1930.

Dandi March was a direct answer to the cruel salt law passed by the British government that gave a monopoly to the government on the manufacturing of salt. Mahatma Gandhi along with his 78 followers marched to Dandi from the Sabarmati Ashram and covered a distance of 385 km on 12 March 1930. On completing the march, Gandhi broke the salt law by collecting the salt from the sea and boiling it.

Causes of Dandi March

Indians were to make salt from the seawater till the Salt Act of 1882 was passed by the British Government. As per the Salt Act, Indians were prohibited from producing or selling salt. The production or sale of salt by anyone other than the British was considered illegal. It was a lucrative monopoly crafted by the British, which required Indians to buy the highly expensive and heavily taxed salt.

The majority of Indians, laborers, and farmers, in particular, could not afford to buy the highly-priced salt that was easily accessible from the coastlines. To defy the unjust Salt Act, Gandhi Ji came up with Salt Satyagrah.

Course of Dandi March

The Dandi March is also popularly known as Salt Satyagraha and is considered the most effective act of the civil disobedience movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. The course of Salt Satyagrah is as follows-

- On 2nd March 1930, Gandhiji informed Lord Irwin about his plan for the march.
- On 12th March 1930, Mahatma Gandhi set out on foot along with 78 followers, from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to the village of Dandi in Navsari District, Gujarat to make salt from seawater by going against the salt act. Along the way, hundreds of supporters joined Gandhiji's core group to protest against the British's monopoly on salt.
- It was a 24-day long march and at every sunset, Gandhiji motivated the followers and other people by attacking the British government's rule through his speeches.
- He was joined by Sarojini Naidu in the Dandi March.
- On 5th April 1930, the entourage reached Dandi village, completing the long journey of 385 kilometers on foot.
- On 6th April, Gandhiji and his followers picked up lumps of salt along the shore, thus breaking the laws of the Salt Act.

Important Effects of Dandi March

Breaking the salt law was a direct challenge to British rule in India. Further, it started a series of salt marches in the country which drew the attention of lakhs of people in the country and even outside. The Dandi March, led by Mahatma Gandhi resulted in the following-

- After the highly visible Dandi March, Gandhiji continued to protest against the salt tax and encouraged fellow Indians to commit non-violent acts of civil disobedience. However, the British Government tried to suppress these movements but it was of no use to them.
- Several peaceful marchers were arrested by the British Government, including Gandhiji himself.
- Besides the Salt Act, several other acts including the Land Tax, Chowkidar Tax, and Forest Tax were being defied by Indians.
- The movement resulted in violence in certain parts of the country like Karachi and Calcutta. But unlike the Non-cooperation movement, the Salt Satyagrah movement was not called off by Gandhi Ji.
- A similar march was led by C. Rajagopalachari from Trichy to Vedaranyam on the southeast coast of Tamil Nadu.
- Inspired by the Dandi March, similar marches were conducted in the Malabar region of Calicut, Assam, and Andhra Pradesh.
- Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the disciple of Gandhi, led Satyagrah in Peshawar and got arrested. During Satyagrah, he trained Khudai Khidmatgars. They were fired by the British army as they had gathered in Qissa Khwani Bazaar, despite being unarmed.
- Masses boycotted foreign clothes. Even the liquor stores were picketed.
- Sarojini Naidu led a peaceful protest against the Dharasana Salt Works on 21 May 1930. However, police started Lathi-charged which resulted in the brutal death of the two protestors.
- The protest pushed these freedom fighters and their struggle for independence under western media's limelight.
- Gandhiji was released from custody in January 1931, after which the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on 5th March 1931. The pact marked the end of Satyagraha and the Civil Disobedience movement in India.

Major Drawbacks of Dandi March

Though Dandi March is considered to be one of the historical events in the Indian struggle for independence, it took a long time to get independence. The following drawbacks of Salt Satyagrah led to the delay-

- There was no procure of huge concessions from the British Government.
- Since Britishers were able to play the divide and rule, the Salt Satyagrah movement was not supported by Muslims to a greater extent.

Importance of Dandi March in Civil Disobedience Movement

Soon after Gandhi Ji was released from jail, he tried to compromise with the British government before launching the Civil Disobedience movement. He placed 11 essential demands which were accepted by Lord Irwin in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The major demands of Gandhi Ji were-

- Reduction of rupee-Sterling ratio.
- Abolishment of the Salt tax.
- Abolishment of Salt monopoly by government
- Reduction in the highest grade services salaries
- Reduction in military expenditure
- Indian textiles protection
- Reduction in land revenue
- Discharge of all the political prisoners.

Recreation of Dandi March in 2021

To celebrate the significant and memorable Dandi March that took place 91 years ago, 81 participants from Ahmedabad reenacted the Dandi March on 12th March 2021, as they embarked on their journey from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi village.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the Padayatra (journey by foot), an enactment of the Dandi March, to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence. The recreation of the Dandi March is part of the Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav launched by the Prime Minister to signify 75 years of Indian Independence.

During the inauguration of the event, Prime Minister Modi also launched 'Atmanirbhar Incubator', a program of the Ministry of Culture to preserve the art and skills of local artisans and craftsmen and promote indigenous cotton and other cotton products.

He also launched the official website for the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

