

Vol III Issue VI July 2013 ISSN No : 2230-7850

Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

*Indian Streams
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

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GANDHIAN EXPERIMENT OF SALT SATYAGRAHA

Santappa Rathod

Research Scholar, Gulbarga University, Gulbarga

Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated Satyagraha in a big way as a powerful weapon to resist the mighty British Raj of various stages. Among his various Satyagraha experiments, the Dandi Salt Satyagraha proved very successful and famous, with attracted attention all across the world. The present paper is a modest attempt to give a clear picture of the way in which the famous Salt Satyagraha was being operated by the people of Godavari District, where the district leaders always tried to make the Salt Satyagraha movement a complete nonviolence type as desired by the architect of Satyagraha — the Mahatma. It also reflects the wifi power of the Satyagrahis of the district and the cordial relationship between the district leaders and the Congress high command.

Keyword: Salt Satyagraha , architect . demonstrated , Civil Disobedience.

INTRODUCTION

A new atmosphere was created in the Lahore Session of the Congress which met in December 1929 under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. This Congress appealed to the nation "zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress," and authorized the All India Congress Committee launch a programme of Civil Disobedience.¹ The Lahore Session of the Congress also changed the creed of the Congress from dominion status to complete independence. The Congress Working Committee met at Sabarmati on February 14, 1930 and formally authorized Mahatma Gandhi to start the Civil Disobedience Campaign. By that time, Gandhi had made up his mind that the campaign should in the first instance take the form of breaking the salt law which he regarded as the most iniquitous of the laws in the Indian Status Book.² Gandhi choose the Salt Law because the tax on salt was one of the most unjust levies, as it was many times the cost of salt. It touched the poorest as well as the rich and thus, an appeal based on that tax was most likely to be universal. Even the poor classes had to pay tax on salt with the result that they could not procure it in sufficient quantities for themselves and for their cattle. Not even the people living on the seaside could make salt for their own consumption. All these restrictions were imposed in the interests of the British commercial class.²

Gandhi's selection of the salt tax for launching of a new civil disobedience movement was thus both an economic and a tactical move. He knew that though to the common man it might appear to be rather trivial, the salt tax issue would touch the hearts of millions of Indians, particularly the rural poor. Though many educated people even among nationalists laughed at the idea of Salt Satyagraha, it turned out to be a momentous event. The method of implementing the Satyagraha was also extremely effective. Gandhi decided that he and the other Satyagrahis should take long marches from the interior areas to the sea-coasts where they would make salt from the salt water of the seas without authorization from the Government and thus break the law. By this method the government was also aware of the express notice of the intentions of the Satyagraha movement, as it has come to be called a great movement in

the nationalist struggle under Gandhi's leadership. Though it lasted for a few months (from April to July) the repercussions of it remained for a few years to come. It paved the way for a longer period of Civil Disobedience Movement. It is for this reason that in 1930 with 79 co-workers from Sabarmati, Mahatma Gandhi started marching for Dandi on the Arabian sea-coast to break the salt law. It took him 24 days to reach Dandi. As a result of this march, the whole country bubbled with tremendous excitement and enthusiasm.³

In the East Godavari District, the Salt Satyagraha commenced and continued for nearly three months. The district flanks the bay of Bengal with the hinterland extending at places upto 60 to 70 miles from the coast. Therefore, it had an advantage in providing a very natural setting for the operations of Salt Satyagraha. Even more important was the leadership. As already mentioned, the Congress by then had a very strong leadership in this district. Further, the district, being close to the coast, the leaders had enough time to mobilize the public for participating in the Satyagrahe marches from the various places in the district to the store of the sea at different ports. Thus, while Gandhi started his march from Sabarmati on 12th March and reached Dandi on 6th April, the local leaders of the East Godavari District did not lend that much of time to undertake their march to the coastal areas. They utilized this time for mobilizing the movement. The release of Samba Murty in March 1930 who was in prison at Bellary as a result of his participation in the agitation against the Simon Commission in 1929 also proved timely for the Salt Satyagraha in the district. His release brought confidence among other leaders and the general public as well.⁴ When Kala Venkata Rao, the Secretary of the East Godavari District Congress Committee announced that Samba Murty would be released from prison on 13th March, the news was received throughout the district with great relief and enthusiasm.⁴ Almost immediately after his arrival from the Bellary Jail, Samba Murthy plunged into action. He and other leaders devised to use the time available before the date on which Gandhi wanted to break the salt law at Dandi to mobilize the people of the East Godavari District and to make the Salt Satyagraha into a mighty one. Samba Murty's contribution to this was very great. His plan was to tour the entire district to awaken the people for the futurç

	<p>Indian Streams Research Journal ISSN 2230-7850 Volume-3, Issue-6, July-2013</p> <p>course of action. He delivered a lecture at Sradhanandaghat in Rajahmundry and' conveyed the people that on the 31 March, 1930 the volunteers of the Salt Satyagraha movement were going to make a march in the district to awaken the people in taking part in the Salt Satyagraha From there, he proceeded to Seetanagaram, a picturesque place where a Satyagraha Ashram was started by Dr. Subrahmanyam in 1924 to have a detailed discussion with his co-workers-Dr. Subrahmanyam, Venneti Satyanarayana and Kala Venkata Rao as to how to organize the march, With their support Samba Murty was able to organize a grand march. On the Telugu New Years Day, 88 volunteers under the leadership of Samba Murty, Dr.Subrahmanyam, and K.V.R. Swamy left the Ashram. At 5.00 p.m. thousands of people followed the volunteer corps till they reached Racimpeta, their first manjil.⁵ Throughout his march, Samba Murty delivered speeches at important places and explained to the volunteers exhaustively that they should be prepared to face various difficulties during the struggle. The great march .finally reached Kakinada port on 6th April. To give necessary training to the volunteers, Samba Murty opened a Santi Shibirain in Kakinada. For the Shibiram, Samba Murty selected the house of Dr. Vedantam Venicata Krishnayya. Dr. Venkata Krishnayya and his wife Kamala devi had actively participated in the non-cooperation movement. They also became the prominent participant in the Salt Satyagraha movement in the Kakinada town. This couple was noted for their hospitality, courage and public spirit. Being a doctor, Venkata Krishnayya converted his house into a nursing home to treat the Satyag'rahis who were suffering from the lathi blows by the policé.⁶</p> <p>A batch of young volunteers from Seetanagaran'i which included Ramachandrani Venkatappa, P. Suryaprakasa Rao, Marima Subba Rao, Chelikani Rama Rao and Garimella Veerabhadra Rao were kept in-charge of the Shibiram.. Samba Murthy himself declared the camp open and while doing it, he thanked the couple Dr. Vedarttam Venkata Krirhnayya and his wife for their hospitality towards the Satyagrahis.⁷</p> <p>REFERENCES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.B.Pattabhi Seetaramayya, The History of Indian National Congress, Vol.I, Op.cit., p.605. 2.M.Venkatarangaiya (Ed)., The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh, Vol.III, Hyderabad, 1935, p.135. 3.R.R.Diwakar, Satyagraha, its Technique and History (Satyagraha, the Power of Truth), Bombay, 1946, p.106. 4.P.C.Gosh, Mahatma as I Saw Him, Delhi, 1968, p.137. 5.Ibid. 6.Andhra Patrika, February 7, 1930. 7.Ibid., March 17, 1930 	
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