

Activity 7. Non-Violent Civil Disobedience in India (1930)

Background: One of the most dramatic campaigns in India's long struggle for Independence from Great Britain was the Salt March in 1930. It is also a classic example of non-violent civil disobedience. According to a number of sources, at the end of the march, Mohandas Gandhi stood on the shore of the Indian Ocean with a handful of mud and salt and declared, "With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire." Read the excerpt from the newspaper article and answer questions 1 – 4.

Gandhi Starts Salt Defiance; Troops Ready For Disorder

Source: Syracuse (NY) *Herald* April 6, 1930, p. 1

<http://www.newspaperarchive.com>, accessed January 11, 2010

A. Jalalpur, India, April 6 (Associated Press) Mahatma Gandhi manufactured salt from sea water here this morning, thereby breaking the British law establishing a monopoly on salt manufacture. At 6:30 A.M. Gandhi and a group of his followers waded into the waters of the Gulf of Cambay at Dandi, near here, and began the manufacture of salt.

B. Nearly a month has passed since the Mahatma and a little party of followers left Ahmadabad for the 165-mile march to the sea. The party stopped in villages at night and at each one the venerable nationalist leader, whose title means "the holy one," gained supporters and obtain resignations of village headmen.

C. At Dandi last night they prepared for the first definite act of civil defiance. As the first step they waded into the waters of the tidal marshes and filled pots with salt water. These were placed in the sun for the evaporation of the water, and the residue of salt will be removed for sale.

D. The first sales will be made in the streets of Ahmadabad, with members of the all-India congress committee directing the hawking. The salt is said to be unedible, but the mere manufacture and sale of it constitutes a breach of law and fulfills Gandhi's aim. If the nationalists succeed in their first action of the plan for non-cooperation with government agencies they intend to follow in time with non-payment of taxes and resignation of native officials.

Questions

1. How did the protesters make salt?
2. Why did Gandhi and the All-India Congress Committee make salt?
3. In your opinion, why did the protesters march to the coast rather than just meeting there?
4. In your opinion, why did the international press cover these events?