



DANDI MARCH - GS I MAINS

Q. The Civil Disobedience Movement marked a crucial phase in India's struggle for independence showcasing the power of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience as effective tools against colonial oppression. Elucidate (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *On Dandi March anniversary, PM Modi launches master plan for Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram redevelopment*

What's in the news?

- Describing various initiatives of his government as “a way of its dedication towards Mahatma Gandhi”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a master plan for the Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram redevelopment project in Ahmedabad, on the anniversary of the historic Dandi March.

Dandi March:

- The 1882 Salt Act gave the British a monopoly in the manufacture and sale of salt. Even though salt was freely available on the coasts of India, Indians were forced to buy it from the colonisers.
- After the halt of Non-cooperation movement in 1920's, Mahatma Gandhi decided that if there was any one product through which civil disobedience movement could be inaugurated, then it was salt. He said “Next to air and water, salt is perhaps the greatest necessity of life,”
- The British government, including the Viceroy Lord Irwin too did not take the prospect of a campaign against the salt tax too seriously.
- The 24-day march from March 12 to April 5, 1930 from Sabarmati ashram in Ahmedabad to a coastal village called Dandi was undertaken.
- It was a tax resistance campaign against the British salt monopoly over salt.
- Mahatma Gandhi reached Dandi on April 5. The following day, early morning he proceeded along with the other marchers to the sea, where he picked up lumps of natural salt lying in a small pit and said “With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire.”

Backdrop:

Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM):

- The Civil Disobedience Movement is a crucial chapter in the history of India's struggle for independence, led by Mahatma Gandhi.
- The Civil Disobedience Movement began with Mahatma Gandhi's well-known Dandi March.
- Gandhi set out on foot from the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on March 12, 1930, with 78 other Ashram members for Dandi, a village on India's western seacoast about 385 kilometres from Ahmedabad.
- On April 6, 1930, they arrived in Dandi.



Time Period: 1930-1934

Objective:

- To demand complete independence (Purna Swaraj) for India.
- To protest against the oppressive British salt tax and other discriminatory laws.
- To mobilize the Indian masses in nonviolent resistance against British rule.

Method of Protest:

- Civil Disobedience
- Non-violent Resistance
- Salt Satyagraha - Symbolic production and selling of salt without paying taxes, breaking the salt laws.
- Boycott of British Goods - Indians boycotted British goods and institutions.
- Non-Cooperation - People refused to cooperate with British authorities, surrendered titles and honours.
- Women's Participation - Significant involvement of women in protests and marches

Causes of Civil Disobedience Movement:

- The formation of the Simon Commission.
- The rejection of the demand for Dominion Status.
- The demonstrations against the detention of social revolutionaries, etc.
- The British government's lack of genuine interest in giving Dominion Status was evident to the nationalist leaders. In an emergency meeting held in Lahore in December 1929, the INC under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership announced Purna Swaraj, or "Complete Independence," as the Congress's main objective.
- The Congress Working Committee (CWC) was authorized by the Lahore Congress of 1929 to start a campaign of civil disobedience, which included not paying taxes. At Sabarmati Ashram in 1930, Gandhi was given full authority by the CWC to start the Civil Disobedience Movement whenever and wherever he chose. Additionally, it enabled Mahatma Gandhi the freedom to start a national campaign of civil disobedience whenever and wherever he pleased.

Impact of Civil Disobedience Movement:

1. Popularized New Methods of Non-violent Resistance:

- The CDM was the first time that Gandhi's principles of nonviolence were used on a large scale in India.
- The movement involved a variety of nonviolent tactics, such as boycotts, strikes and civil disobedience.
- These tactics were effective in disrupting British rule and raising awareness of the Indian independence movement.



2. Wider Participation:

- It united Indians from all walks of life.
- The CDM brought together people from different religions, castes and social classes. It also attracted the participation of women and children.

3. Weakened British Authority:

- The CDM showed the British that the Indian people were determined to achieve independence.
- It also led to the loss of British revenue and the erosion of British prestige.

4. Laid the Groundwork for Indian Independence:

- The CDM helped to prepare India for independence. It showed that Indians were capable of organizing and carrying out a mass movement.
- It also helped to raise international awareness of the Indian independence movement.

5. Worldwide Attention:

- The historic march pushed the Indian independence movement into the forefront of world media.
- The American weekly magazine Time had printed the picture of Gandhi on its front page and described the power of non-violence and brutality of The British government. Gandhi became a household name in the west.
- More than 30 years later, Satyagraha and the March to Dandi exercised a strong influence on Activist Martin Luther King Jr. known for his contributions to the American civil rights movement and his fight for civil rights for blacks in the 1960s.

6. Pan-India Participation:

- The march had begun from along India's west coast and reached almost every corner of the country.
- Nehru and Gandhi's arrest in April and May respectively evoked huge demonstrations in Madras, Calcutta, Karachi, Bombay, Delhi and Sholapur.
- While Gandhi's close associate C. Rajagopalachari, organized the Vedaranyam salt march in parallel on the east coast and after making illegal salt in the coastal village of Vedaranyam, he too was arrested by the British. Besides this, in Malabar K. Kelappan, in Odisha Gopabandhu Choudhury, in Bengal Subhas Bose and J.M. Sengupta led the Salt Satyagraha under the banner of Gandhi.
- Bihar, Peshawar, Sholapur, Dharasana, United Provinces, Manipur, and Nagaland landlocked states also responded to Gandhi's call of non-violence movement.

7. Women Participation:

- Women for the first time played a significant role in picketing liquor shops, opium dens, and shops selling foreign clothes.
- A Naga Spiritual leader Rani Gaidinliu raised the banner of revolt against British rule.



- The unfinished task of leading a raid on the Dharasana Salt Works was taken up by Sarojini Naidu after Gandhi's arrest.
- For Indian women, the movement became the maximum releasing level in and might truly be stated to have marked their access into the general public sphere.

Why was Salt chosen by Gandhiji as a Weapon?

- Because salt was considered to be a basic right of every Indian, it was chosen to represent the beginning of the civil disobedience movement.
- Gandhi once famously said, "There is no other product besides water that the government can tax in order to feed the millions of people who are starving, as well as the sick, the injured, and the totally defenceless. It is the cruelest poll tax that man has ever devised."
- Salt made a quick connection between the swaraj ideal and a very genuine and common complaint of the rural poor (and with no socially divisive implications like a no-rent campaign).
- Similar to khadi, salt gave the poor a small but psychologically significant source of income through self-help and gave urban believers a chance to symbolically relate to widespread misery.

Limitations of Civil Disobedience Movement:

- The movement primarily involved the urban middle class, while the peasantry and other marginalized groups remained largely uninvolved. This limited the movement's reach and its ability to mobilize the masses.
- The movement ignored the untouchables.
- Muslims were less likely to participate due to advice from communal leaders and the government's efforts to promote communalism as a response to nationalism.
 - The Muslim political organisations do not participate, the gap between Hindus and Muslims widens.
 - Muslim's demand for special seats led to disputes between Congress and Muslims.
- Industrial workers, except in Nagpur, did not participate extensively in the movement.

Government Response to the Civil Disobedience Movement:

- Initially, the government's attitude was ambivalent, facing a dilemma between using force and risking accusations of repression or taking little action and being accused of conceding to Congress.
- However, as repression intensified, the government issued ordinances curbing civil liberties and implemented press censorship.
- Provincial governments were given the power to ban civil disobedience organizations, and the Congress Working Committee was eventually declared illegal.
- Lathi's charges and firing on unarmed crowds resulted in numerous deaths, injuries, and the imprisonment of satyagrahis, including Gandhi and other Congress leaders.
- Viceroy Lord Irwin proposed a round table conference and reiterated the goal of dominion status.



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- Efforts were made to explore peace possibilities between Congress and the government, including meetings between Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Gandhi.
- The demands put forward by Nehru and Gandhi included the right to secede from Britain, complete national government control over defence and finance, and an independent tribunal to settle Britain's financial claims.

The Civil Disobedience Movement marked a crucial phase in India's struggle for independence. It showcased the power of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience as effective tools against colonial oppression. Although it was temporarily suspended in 1934, the movement laid the groundwork for future protests and ultimately contributed to India gaining independence in 1947.

