The Gandhi Reader

A SOURCE BOOK
OF HIS LIFE
AND WRITINGS

EDITED BY Homer A. Jack

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sider these also symbols of the civilization that you have described?
EDITOR: You make a mistake. The defects that you have shown are defects. Nobody mistakes them for ancient civilization. They remain in spite of it. Attempts have always been made and will be made to remove them. We may utilize the new spirit that is born in us for purging ourselves of these evils. But what I have described to you as emblems of modern civilization are accepted as such by its votaries. The Indian civilization, as described by me, has been so described by its votaries. In no part of the world, and under no civilization, have all men attained perfection. The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behooves every lover of India to cling to the old Indian civilization even as a child clings to the mother's breast.

PASSIVE RESISTANCE (Chapter XVII)

READER: Is there any historical evidence as to the success of what you have called soul-force or truth-force? No instance seems to have happened of any nation having risen through soul-force. I still think that the evil-doers will not cease doing evil without physical punishment.

EDITOR: The poet Tulsidas has said: “Of religion, pity, or love, is the root, as egotism of the body. Therefore, we should not abandon pity so long as we are alive.” This appears to me to be a scientific truth. I believe in it as much as I believe in two and two being four. The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth. We have evidence of its working at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force. But you ask for historical evidence. It is, therefore, necessary to know what history means. The Gujarati equivalent means; “It so happened.” If that is the meaning of history, it is possible to give copious evidence. But, if it means the doings of kings and emperors, there can be no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance in such history. You cannot expect silver ore in a tin mine. History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world, and so there is a proverb among Englishmen that a nation which has no history, that is, no wars, is a happy nation. How kings played, how they became enemies of one another, how they murdered one another, is found accurately recorded in history, and if this were all that had happened in the world, it would have been ended long ago. If the story of the universe had commenced with wars, not a man would have been found alive today. Those people who have been warred against have disappeared as, for instance, the natives of Australia of whom hardly a man was left alive by the intruders. Mark, please, that these natives did not use soul-force in self-defense, and it does not require much foresight to know that the Australians will share the same fate as their victims. “Those that take the sword shall perish by the sword.” With us the proverb is that professional swimmers will find a watery grave.

The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love. Therefore, the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on.

Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and re-awakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this. But if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason, take up arms or go to law—which is another form of the exhibition of brute force—their doings would be immediately noticed in the press, they would be the talk of their neighbors and would probably go down to history. And what is true of families and communities is true of nations. There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families and another for nations. History,
then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.

reader: According to what you say, it is plain that instances of this kind of passive resistance are not to be found in history. It is necessary to understand this passive resistance more fully. It will be better, therefore, if you enlarge upon it.

editor: Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.

Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes. Men have before now done many things which were subsequently found to have been wrong. No man can claim that he is absolutely in the right or that a particular thing is wrong because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgment. It is therefore meet that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence whatever it may be. This is the key to the use of soul-force.

reader: You would then disregard laws—this is rank disloyalty. We have always been considered a law-abiding nation. You seem to be going even beyond the extremists. They say that we must obey the laws that have been passed, but that if the laws be bad, we must drive out the law-givers even by force.

editor: Whether I go beyond them or whether I do not is a matter of no consequence to either of us. We simply want to find out what is right and to act accordingly. The real meaning of the statement that we are a law-abiding nation is that we are passive resisters. When we do not like certain laws, we do not break the heads of law-givers but we suffer and do not submit to the laws. That we should obey laws whether good or bad is a new-fangled notion. There was no such thing in former days. The people disregarded those laws they did not like and suffered the penalties for their breach. It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to religion and means slavery. If the Government were to ask us to go about without any clothing, should we do so? If I were a passive resister, I would say to them that I would have nothing to do with their law. But we have so forgotten ourselves and become so compliant that we do not mind any degrading law.

A man who has realized his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else. Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him. Even the Government does not expect any such thing from us. They do not say: “You must do such and such a thing,” but they say: “If you do not do it, we will punish you.” We are sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man’s tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.

It is a superstition and ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority. Many examples can be given in which acts of majorities will be found to have been wrong and those of minorities to have been right. All reforms owe their origin to the initiation of minorities in opposition to majorities. If among a band of robbers a knowledge of robbing is obligatory, is a pious man to accept the obligation? So long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist. And a passive resister alone can remove such a superstition.

To use brute-force, to use gunpowder, is contrary to passive resistance, for it means that we want our opponent to do by force what we desire but he does not. And if such a use of force is justifiable, surely he is entitled to do likewise by us. And so we should never come to an agreement. We may simply fancy, like the blind horse moving in a circle round a mill, that we are
making progress. Those who believe that they are not bound to obey laws which are repugnant to their conscience have only the remedy of passive resistance open to them. Any other must lead to disaster.

Reader: From what you say I deduce that passive resistance is a splendid weapon of the weak, but that when they are strong they may take up arms.

Editor: This is a gross ignorance. Passive resistance, that is, soul-force, is matchless. It is superior to the force of arms. How, then, can it be considered only a weapon of the weak? Physical-force men are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister. Do you believe that a coward can ever disobey a law that he dislikes?) Extremists are considered to be advocates of brute force. Why do they, then, talk about obeying laws? I do not blame them. They can say nothing else. When they succeed in driving out the English and they themselves become governors, they will want you and me to obey their laws. And that is a fitting thing for their constitution. But a passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a cannon.

What do you think? (Wherein is courage required—in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon, or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and be blown to pieces?) Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend, or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.

This, however, I will admit: that even a man weak in body is capable of offering this resistance. One man can offer it just as well as millions. Both men and women can indulge in it. It does not require the training of an army; it needs no jiu-jitsu. Control of the mind is alone necessary, and when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest and his very glance withers the enemy.

Passive resistance is an all-sided sword, it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust. The sword of passive resistance does not require a scabbard. It is strange indeed that you should consider such a weapon to be a weapon merely of the weak.

Reader: From what you say, then, it would appear that it is not a small thing to become a passive resister, and, if that is so, I should like you to explain how a man may become one.

Editor: To become a passive resister is easy enough but it is also equally difficult. I have known a lad of fourteen years become a passive resister; I have known also sick people do likewise; and I have also known physically strong and otherwise happy people unable to take up passive resistance. After a great deal of experience it seems to me that those who want to become passive resisters for the service of the country have to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness.

Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness. A man who is unchaste loses stamina, becomes emasculated and cowardly. He whose mind is given over to animal passions is not capable of any great effort.

Just as there is necessity for chastity, so is there for poverty. Pecuniary ambition and passive resistance cannot go well together. Those who have money are not expected to throw it away, but they are expected to be indifferent about it. They must be prepared to lose every penny rather than give up passive resistance.

Passive resistance has been described in the course of our discussion as truth-force. Truth, therefore, has necessarily to be followed and that at any cost. In this connection, academic questions such as whether a man may not lie in order to save a life, etc., arise, but these questions occur only to those who wish to justify lying. Those who want to follow truth every time are not placed in such a quandary; and if they are, they are still saved from a false position.

Passive resistance cannot proceed a step without fearlessness. Those alone can follow the path of passive resistance who are free
from fear, whether as to their possessions, false honor, their relatives, the government, bodily injuries or death.

These observances are not to be abandoned in the belief that they are difficult. Nature has implanted in the human breast ability to cope with any difficulty or suffering that may come to man unprovoked. These qualities are worth having, even for those who do not wish to serve the country. Let there be no mistake, as those who want to train themselves in the use of arms are also obliged to have these qualities more or less. Everybody does not become a warrior for the wish. A would-be warrior will have to observe chastity and to be satisfied with poverty as his lot. A warrior without fearlessness cannot be conceived of. It may be thought that he would not need to be exactly truthful, but that quality follows real fearlessness. When a man abandons truth, he does so owing to fear in some shape or form. The above four attributes, then, need not frighten anyone. It may be as well here to note that a physical-force man has to have many other useless qualities which a passive resister never needs. And you will find that whatever extra effort a swordsman needs is due to lack of fearlessness. If he is an embodiment of the latter, the sword will drop from his hand that very moment. He does not need its support. One who is free from hatred requires no sword. A man with a stick suddenly came face to face with a lion and instinctively raised his weapon in self-defense. The man saw that he had only prated about fearlessness when there was none in him. That moment he dropped the stick and found himself free from all fear.

CONCLUSION (Chapter XX)

Reader: From your views I gather that you would form a third party. You are neither an extremist nor a moderate.

Editor: That is a mistake. I do not think of a third party at all. We do not all think alike. We cannot say that all the moderates hold identical views. And how can those who want only to serve have a party? I would serve both the moderates and the extremists.

"Indian Home Rule" (1909)

Where I differ from them, I would respectfully place my position before them and continue my service.

Reader: What, then, would you say to both the parties?

Editor: I would say to the extremists: "I know that you want Home Rule for India; it is not to be had for your asking. Everyone will have to take it for himself. What others get for me is not Home Rule but foreign rule; therefore, it would not be proper for you to say that you have obtained Home Rule if you have merely expelled the English. I have already described the true nature of Home Rule. This you would never obtain by force of arms. Brute-force is not natural to Indian soil. You will have, therefore, to rely wholly on soul-force. You must not consider that violence is necessary at any stage for reaching our goal."

I would say to the moderates: "Mere petitioning is derogatory; we thereby confess inferiority. To say that British rule is indispensable, is almost a denial of the Godhead. We cannot say that anybody or anything is indispensable except God. Moreover, common sense should tell us that to state that, for the time being, the presence of the English in India is a necessity, is to make them conceived.

"If the English vacated India, bag and baggage, it must not be supposed that she would be widowed. It is possible that those who are forced to observe peace under their pressure would fight after their withdrawal. There can be no advantage in suppressing an eruption; it must have its vent. If, therefore, before we can remain at peace, we must fight amongst ourselves, it is better that we do so. There is no occasion for a third party to protect the weak. It is this so-called protection which has unnerved us. Such protection can only make the weak weaker. Unless we realize this, we cannot have Home Rule. I would paraphrase the thought of an English divine and say that anarchy under Home Rule were better than orderly foreign rule. Only, the meaning that the learned divine attached to Home Rule is different from Indian Home Rule according to my conception. We have to learn, and to teach others, that we do not want the tyranny of either English rule or Indian rule."
A MEASURE OF THEIR STATURE

by K. R. Kripalani

Tagore died in 1941. K. R. Kripalani, in an essay on the two men, gives a fitting description of their last contacts.

Their last meeting—the most touching and beautiful of all their meetings—took place in Shantiniketan in February 1940, when “this great soul in a beggar’s garb,” to quote the poet’s description, came to see him. A few months later when Tagore lay in Calcutta, hovering between life and death, Gandhi sent his personal secretary, Mahadev Desai, to see him. As Mahadev Desai handed to him Gandhi’s letter, the poet’s hands shook with emotion and tears trickled down his cheeks. He who never wept in sorrow wept in joy. The friendship of these two to the end, despite the many differences that seemed to divide them, will be remembered by their countrymen as an undying testimony to their greatness. Had one of them been a little less great, they would have fallen out. It was so easy to misunderstand each other, with their sensibilities and their ways of living so sharply in contrast, their fields of activity so widely separated, and each surrounded by admirers, not as tolerant and understanding as the masters. That they did not do so is a measure of their stature.


TOWARD DANDI

by H. S. L. Polak

In the years following 1922 the nationalist movement was at a low ebb. In 1924, after his convalescence and release from prison, Gandhi conducted a dramatic twenty-one-day fast to promote Hindu-Moslem unity, but he did not consider the time ripe for a revival of civil disobedience. In 1927 the British government appointed the Simon Commission to make recommendations for further political reform in India, but as the Commission contained no Indian members it was boycotted by Indian nationalists. In 1928, in the Bardoli district near Bombay, a satyagraha campaign against a tax increase won support throughout the country and achieved its aim by non-violent means. Many in the Congress were pressing for action on a wider scale; some even advocated armed rebellion. Gandhi, however, was cautious. At his suggestion, late in 1928 the Congress resolved that unless within one year the British agreed to give India a constitution and Dominion status, a third nation-wide civil disobedience movement would be launched. When the British failed to meet its terms the Congress, in December 1929, at last announced that its goal was full inde-
True to his declaration, just a little before daybreak on the morning of the 12th, Mahatma Gandhi with his 79 volunteers, all students of the Vidyapith, left the Ashram on a campaign of civil disobedience. Their destination was the village of Dandi on the sea coast near Jalalpur where Gandhi was to break the law regarding the manufacture of salt. Streams of Khaddar-clad men and women had flowed to the Ashram all night through to have a "darshan" of Mahatma and witness the great march. Among those were journalists and cameramen from far and near and correspondents of some British papers as well.

"The scenes that preceded, accompanied and followed this great national event," wrote the Bombay Chronicle, "were so enthusiastic, magnificent and soul-stirring that indeed they beggar description. Never was the wave of patriotism so powerful in the hearts of mankind, as it was on this great occasion which is bound

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on the way to Swaraj. Volunteers were enrolling themselves in
the hundreds in the cause of civil disobedience and the headmen
of several villages were resigning their jobs and joining the cam-
paign. The arrest of Mr. Gandhi was supposed to be imminent
and Mahatmaji, as might be expected, was well prepared for it
and he gave instruction that his place should be taken up by Ab-
bas Tyabjee, the aged friend, who had stood by Gandhi through
all the years of Non-cooperation. The fight threatened to be well
nigh grim; and as Sir P. C. Ray said, “Mahatma Gandhi’s historic
march was like the exodus of Israelites under Moses. Until the
Seer seized the promised land, he won’t turn his back.”

Gandhi and his party reached Dandi on the morning of the
5th April. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu had also gone there to see the
Mahatma. Interviewed by the Associated Press immediately after
his arrival at Dandi, Gandhiji said: “God be thanked for what
may be termed the happy ending of the first stage in this, for me
at least, the final struggle for freedom. I cannot withhold my
compliments from the Government for the policy of complete
non-interference adopted by them throughout the march. After
the graceless and childish performance in the matter of Mr. Val-
labha’s arrest and imprisonment and equally unprovoked arrest
and imprisonment of Mr. Sen Gupta, I was wholly unprepared
for this exemplary non-interference. I am not so foolish as to im-
agine that the Government has suddenly lost their proved capac-
ity for provoking popular resentment and then punishing with
frightfulness. I wish I could believe this non-interference was
due to any real change of heart or policy. The wanton disregard
shown by them to popular feeling in the Legislative Assembly
and their high-handed action leave no room for doubt that the
policy of heartless exploitation of India is to be persisted in at any
cost, and so the only interpretation I can put upon this non-inter-
ference is that the British Government, powerful though it is, is
sensitive to world opinion which will not tolerate repression of
extreme political agitation which civil disobedience undoubtedly
is, so long as disobedience remains civil and therefore necessarily
non-violent.

It remains to be seen whether the Government will tolerate as
they have tolerated the march, the actual breach of the salt laws
by countless people from tomorrow. I expect extensive popular
response to the resolution of the Working Committee (of the
Indian National Congress). I have seen nothing to warrant the
cancellation of the notice I have already issued that all Commit-
tees and organizations throughout the length and breadth of the
land are free, if they are prepared to commence from tomorrow
Civil Disobedience in respect of the salt laws. God willing, I ex-
pect with my companions (volunteers) to commence actual Civil
Disobedience at 6:30 tomorrow morning. Sixth April has been
to us since its culmination in Jallianwala massacre a day for pen-
ance and purification. We therefore commence it with prayer and
fasting. I hope the whole of India will observe the National Week
commencing from tomorrow in the spirit in which it was con-
ceived. I am positive that the greater the dedication to the coun-
try’s cause and the greater the purification, the speedier will be the
glorious end for which the millions of India consciously or un-
consciously are striving.”

Gandhi’s prayer on the morning of the 6th was more than
usually solemn. In the course of his speech he observed that if he
was arrested, they should take orders from Mr. Abbas Tyabjee and
if he, too, was removed, from Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. He paid a
tribute to both these leaders and asked the volunteers implicitly
to obey them. Gandhiji concluded his address by asking the vis-
itors not to offer Satyagraha that day, but to do so the next day.
He considered his offer of Civil Disobedience as a great Yagna
and he evidently did not want demonstrations, proceeding out of
motives other than spiritual, to be associated with this great
movement.

Soon after prayers, Mr. Gandhi with his 84 volunteers of the
Gujarat Vidyapith and Saheth Punjabhai of Ahmedabad, pro-
cceeded exactly at 6 in the morning for a bath in the sea. A large
crowd accompanied the party. Gandhi was walking at a slow pace
in grave solemnity and entered the water of the sea amidst loud
cries of “Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai.”
Gandhi was leaning on Miss Abbas Tyabji’s shoulder, and was accompanied by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Then Gandhi and his volunteers proceeded to break the salt law by picking up the salt lying on the seashore. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu hailed the Mahatma by calling him “law-breaker.” No policemen appeared on the scene when Gandhi and his volunteers broke the salt law.

Immediately after breaking the salt law, Mr. Gandhi issued the following press statement: “Now that the technical or ceremonial breach of the salt law has been committed, it is now open to any one who would take the risk of prosecution under the salt law to manufacture salt wherever he wishes and wherever it is convenient. My advice is that workers should everywhere manufacture salt, and where they know how to prepare clean salt, make use of it and instruct the villagers likewise, telling the village at the same time that he runs the risk of being prosecuted. In other words, the villagers should be fully instructed as to the incidence of the salt tax, and the manner of breaking the laws and regulations connected with it so as to have the salt tax repealed.

“It should be made absolutely clear to the villagers that the breach is open, and in no way stealthy. This condition being known, they may manufacture salt or help themselves to the salt manufactured by Nature in creeks and pits near the seashore, use it for themselves and their cattle, and sell it to those who will buy it, it being well understood that all such people are committing a breach of the salt law and running the risk of a prosecution, or even without a prosecution, are to be subjected by so-called salt officers to harassment.

“This war against the salt tax should be continued during the National Week, that is, up to the 13th April. Those who are not engaged in this sacred work should themselves do vigorous propaganda for the boycott of foreign cloth and the use of Khaddar. They should also endeavor to manufacture as much Khaddar as possible. As to this and the prohibition of liquor, I am preparing a message for the women of India who, I am becoming more and more convinced, can make a larger contribution than men towards the attainment of Independence, I feel that they will be worthier interpreters of non-violence than men, not because they are weak as men, in their arrogance, believe them to be, but because they have greater courage of the right type, and immeasurably greater spirit of self-sacrifice.”

Being asked what he would do during the national week, Mr. Gandhi said, “I have a lot of work to do.” He however laughingly added, “I shall encourage illicit manufacture of salt.”

A PINCH OF SALT

by Louis Fischer

Had Gandhi gone by train or automobile to make salt, the effect would have been considerable. But to walk for twenty-four days and rivet the attention of all India to trek across a countryside saying, “Watch, I am about to give a signal to the nation,” and then to pick up a pinch of salt in publicized defiance of the mighty government and thus become a criminal, that required imagination, dignity, and the sense of showmanship of a great artist. It appealed to the illiterate peasant and it appealed to a sophisticated critic and sometime fierce opponent of Gandhi’s like Subhas Chandra Bose who compared the Salt March to Napoleon’s march to Paris on his return from Elba.”

The act performed, Gandhi withdrew from the scene. India had its cue. Gandhi had communicated with it by lifting up some grains of salt.

The next act was an insurrection without arms. Every villager on India’s long seacoast went to the beach or waded into the sea with a pan to make salt. The police began mass arrests. Ramdas, third son of Gandhi, with a large group of ashramites, was ar-
rested. Pandit Malaviya and other moderate cooperators resigned from the Legislative Assembly. The police began to use violence. Civil resisters never resisted arrest; but they resisted the confiscation of the salt they had made, and Mahadev Desai reported cases where such Indians were beaten and bitten in the fingers by constables. Congress Volunteers openly sold contraband salt in cities. Many were arrested and sentenced to short prison terms. In Delhi, a meeting of fifteen thousand persons heard Pandit Malaviya appeal to the audience to boycott foreign cloth; he himself bought some illegal salt after his speech. The police raided the Congress party headquarters in Bombay where salt was being made in pans on the roof. A crowd of sixty thousand assembled. Hundreds were handcuffed or their arms fastened with ropes and led off to jail. In Ahmedabad, ten thousand people obtained illegal salt from Congress in the first week after the act at Dandi. They paid what they could; if they had no money they got it free. The salt lifted by Gandhi from the beach was sold to a Dr. Kanuga, the highest bidder, for 1,600 rupees. Jawaharlal Nehru, the president of the Congress, was arrested in Allahabad under the Salt Acts and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The agitation and disobedience spread to the turbulent regions of the Maharashtra and Bengal. In Calcutta, the Mayor, J. M. Sengupta, read seditious literature aloud at a public meeting and urged non-wearing of foreign textiles. He was put in prison for six months. Picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops commenced throughout India. Girls and ladies from aristocratic families and from families where purdah had been observed came out into the streets to demonstrate. . . .

The Salt March (1930)

A SPRING HAD BEEN RELEASED

by Jawaharlal Nehru

The sixth of April was the first day of the National Week, which is celebrated annually in memory of the happenings in 1919, from Satyagraha Day to Jallianwala Bagh. On that day Gandhiji began the breach of the salt laws at Dandi beach, and three or four days later permission was given to all Congress organizations to do likewise and begin civil disobedience in their own areas.

It seemed as though a spring had been suddenly released; all over the country, in town and village, salt manufacture was the topic of the day, and many curious expedients were adopted to produce salt. We knew precious little about it, and so we read it up where we could and issued leaflets giving directions; we collected pots and pans and ultimately succeeded in producing some unwholesome stuff, which we waved about in triumph and often auctioned for fancy prices. It was really immaterial whether the stuff was good or bad; the main thing was to commit a breach of the obnoxious salt law, and we were successful in that, even though the quality of our salt was poor. As we saw the abounding enthusiasm of the people and the way salt-making was spreading like a prairie fire, we felt a little abashed and ashamed for having questioned the efficacy of this method when it was first proposed by Gandhiji. And we marveled at the amazing knack of the man to impress the multitude and make it act in an organized way.

*Reprinted with permission from Jawaharlal Nehru, Toward Freedom (New York: John Day, 1944), pp. 159-60.*
Two flashlights are directed upon the face of the occupant of the cot. The Mahatma, half-clad, weary of limb, having had less than two hours' rest, sleepily turns from one side to the other in order to dodge the dazzling light. Suddenly the words "Please wake up!" strike his ears. He is up in his bed. Gazing at the police party surrounding him, he takes in the situation all at once. He decides to break his silence.

Mahatma Gandhi: "Have you come to arrest me?"

The District Magistrate: "Yes. Your name is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi?"

Mahatma Gandhi (getting off the bed): "Do you mind waiting until I brush my teeth and wash my face?"

The District Superintendent of Police (stiffly looking at his time-piece): "You may brush your teeth."

While the Mahatma is getting washed, a bell is rung at the school building. All the inmates of the Camp are immediately up and seen surrounding the police party. They make efforts to get inside the police cordon and after a while succeed in going near the Mahatma. They are steadfastly gazing at their beloved leader.

Mahatma Gandhi (still brushing his teeth): "Mr. District Magistrate, may I know the charge on which I am arrested? Is it Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code?"

The District Magistrate: "Whereas the Governor-in-Council views with alarm the activities of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, he directs that the said Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi should be placed under restraint under Regulation XXV of 1827, and suffer imprisonment during the pleasure of the government; and that he be immediately removed to the Yeravda Central Jail."

Mahatma Gandhi (disappointed that it was not Section 124-A): "Thank you! (Turning to his grandson): Please make up my
bedding. (Turning to Mr. V. G. Desai, Acting Commandant of
the Non-Violent Battalion): Please take charge of the important
papers from my satchels. (Turning to one of his other awestruck
followers): Please get me two taklis (hand-spindles) and some
slivers."

District Magistrate and District Superintendent of Police (in
unison, their eyes fixed upon their time-pieces): "Please hurry up,
please hurry up!"

It is now one o’clock. The darkness thickens.

Mahatma Gandhi (surrounded by his loyal band of Satyagrah-
ists, i.e., Civil Resisters): "Punditji, please recite the hymn de-
scribing the qualities of a Vaishnava. [The famous hymn with
which the Great March was commenced on the 12th of March,
1930, with which the violation of the Salt Act was undertaken on
the 6th of April, 1930]."

The Mahatma stands up, his eyes closed, his head bent in mute
reverence, while Pundit Khare recites the hymn. At the end of
the hymn Punditji leads the congregational worship in which all,
including the thirty odd Indian policemen, participate. The two
English officers are standing stiffly, watch in hand, during the
singing of the Vaishnava hymn.

Pundit Khare (seated on the ground, mono-string musical in-
strument in hand): "Oh Ramal Lord of the Dynasty of Raghus!
Thou, an ideal king, an ideal husband of the ideal wife Sita, Thou
art verily the Redeemer of the fallen and the sinful!"

The congregation repeats this verse each time after Punditji:
sings it. The joyous chanting purifies the countryside—white clouds
are seen hovering overhead.

District Magistrate and District Superintendent of Police (in
unison, their eyes fixed upon their time-pieces, a bit nervously):
"Please hurry up, please hurry up!"

One by one the Civil Resisters bow down before the Mahatma,
touching his feet most reverently, and bid him farewell most
tenderly and affectionately.

The young lady (touching the Mahatma’s feet): "Have you any
message for Kasturba?"
Dharasana Salt Raid
by Webb Miller

Just before Gandhi's arrest on May 5, 1930, at Karadi, near Dandi, he announced his intention of raiding the Dharasana Salt Works about 150 miles north of Bombay. With Gandhi in jail, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu—close associate of Gandhi and Indian poetess—assumed the leadership and went to the site with 2,500 volunteers. Webb Miller, well-known foreign correspondent for the United Press, heard about this projected salt raid on May 21, and wrote the following eye-witness account.

After witnessing two serious riots at the Wadala salt pans in the suburbs of Bombay, I received on the evening of May 20, 1930, an important tip from a friendly Gandhi sympathizer. He told me they were planning the biggest demonstration yet at Dharasana, about a hundred and fifty miles north of Bombay.

“Sarojini Naidu, the famous Indian poetess, is leading a non-violent demonstration against the big salt pans near Dharasana. The nearest railway station is Dungri. It is an isolated spot and you will have to take your own food and water. You’d better telegraph Mme. Naidu to provide transportation from Dungri, otherwise you will have to walk many miles. Be sure to take an adequate supply of bottled water, because the water from native sources is unhealthy for white men.”

... Dungri consisted of a little huddle of native huts on the dusty plain. There were no means of transportation because Mme. Naidu had not received my telegram. I could find nobody who spoke English. By repeatedly pronouncing the word “Dharasana” and pointing questioningly around the horizon, I got directions and set off across country on foot through cactus hedges, millet fields, and inch-deep dust, inquiring my way by signs.

After plodding about six miles across country lugging a pack of sandwiches and two quart bottles of water under a sun which was already blazing hot, inquiring from every native I met, I reached the assembling place of the Gandhi followers. Several long, open, thatched sheds were surrounded by high cactus thickets. The sheds were literally swarming and buzzed like a beehive with some 2,500 Congress or Gandhi men dressed in the regulation uniform of rough homespun cotton dhotis and triangular Gandhi caps, somewhat like American overseas soldiers’ hats. They chattered excitedly and when I arrived hundreds surrounded me, with evidences of hostility at first. After they learned my identity, I was warmly welcomed by young college-educated, English-speaking men and escorted to Mme. Naidu. The famous Indian poetess, stocky, swarthy, strong-featured, barelegged, dressed in rough, dark homespun robe and sandals, welcomed me. She explained that she was busy marshaling her forces for the demonstration against the salt pans and would talk with me more at length later. She was educated in England and spoke English fluently.

Mme. Naidu called for prayer before the march started and the entire assemblage knelt. She exhorted them: “Gandhi’s body is in jail but his soul is with you. India’s prestige is in your hands. You must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten but you must not resist; you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows.” Wild, shrill cheers terminated her speech.

Slowly and in silence the throng commenced the half-mile march to the salt deposits. A few carried ropes for lassoing the barbed-wire stockade around the salt pans. About a score who were assigned to act as stretcher-bearers wore crude, hand-painted red crosses pinned to their breasts; their stretchers consisted of blankets. Manilal Gandhi, second son of Gandhi, walked among the foremost of the marchers. As the throng drew near the salt
pans they commenced chanting the revolutionary slogan, "In-
quilah zindabad," intoning the two words over and over.

The salt deposits were surrounded by ditches filled with water and guarded by four hundred native Surat police in khaki shorts and brown turbans. Half a dozen British officials commanded them. The police carried lathis—five-foot clubs tipped with steel. Inside the stockade twenty-five native riflemen were drawn up.

In complete silence the Gandhi men drew up and halted a hundred yards from the stockade. A picked column advanced from the crowd, waded the ditches, and approached the barbed-wire stockade, which the Surat police surrounded, holding their clubs at the ready. Police officials ordered the marchers to disperse under a recently imposed regulation which prohibited gatherings of more than five persons in any one place. The column silently ignored the warning and slowly walked forward. I stayed with the main body about a hundred yards from the stockade.

Suddenly, at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like tenpins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.

Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. When every one of the first column had been knocked down stretcher-bearers rushed up unmolested by the police and carried off the injured to a thatched hut which had been arranged as a temporary hospital.

Then another column formed while the leaders pleaded with them to retain their self-control. They marched slowly toward the police. Although every one knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. They marched steadily with heads up, without the encouragement of music or cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward until struck down. There were no outcries, only groans after they fell. There were not enough stretcher-bearers to carry off the wounded; I saw eighteen injured being carried off simultaneously, while forty-two still lay bleeding on the ground awaiting stretcher-bearers. The blankets used as stretchers were sodden with blood.

At times the spectacle of unresisting men being methodically bashed into a bloody pulp sickened me so much that I had to turn away. The western mind finds it difficult to grasp the idea of nonresistance. I felt an indefinable sense of helpless rage and loathing, almost as much against the men who were submitting unresistingly to being beaten as against the police wielding the clubs, and this despite the fact that when I came to India I sympathized with the Gandhi cause.

Several times the leaders nearly lost control of the waiting crowd. They rushed up and down, frantically pleading with and exhorting the intensely excited men to remember Gandhi's instructions. It seemed that the unarmed throng was on the verge of launching a mass attack upon the police. The British official in charge, Superintendent Robinson of Surat, sensed the imminence of an outbreak and posted his twenty-five riflemen on a little knoll ready to fire. He came to me, inquired my identity, and said: "You'd better move aside out of the line of shooting. We may be forced to open fire into the crowd." While we were talking one of the Gandhites, a young university student, ran up to Robinson, his face contorted by rage, tore open his cotton smock, exposing his bare breast, and shrieked: "Shoot me, shoot me! Kill me, it's for my country!" The leaders managed to calm the crowd.

The Gandhi men altered their tactics, marched up in groups of twenty-five and sat on the ground near the salt pans, making no
effort to draw nearer. Led by a coffee-colored Parsi sergeant of police named Antia, a hulking, ugly-looking fellow, detachments of police approached one seated group and called upon them to disperse under the non-assemblage ordinance. The Gandhi followers ignored them and refused even to glance up at the lathis brandished threateningly above their heads. Upon a word from Antia the beating recommenced coldly, without anger. Bodies toppled over in threes and fours, bleeding from great gashes on their scalps. Group after group walked forward, sat down, and submitted to being beaten into insensibility without raising an arm to fend off the blows.

Finally the police became enraged by the nonresistance, sharing, I suppose, the helpless rage I had already felt at the demonstrators for not fighting back. They commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and testicles. The injured men writhed and squealed in agony, which seemed to inflame the fury of the police, and the crowd again almost broke away from their leaders. The police then began dragging the sitting men by the arms or feet, sometimes for a hundred yards, and throwing them into ditches. One was dragged to the ditch where I stood; the splash of his body doused me with muddy water. Another policeman dragged a Gandhi man to the ditch, threw him in, then belabored him over the head with his lathi. Hour after hour stretcher-bearers carried back a stream of inert, bleeding bodies. I went to see Mme. Naidu, who was directing the subleaders in keeping the crowds from charging the police. While we were talking one of the British officials approached her, touched her on the arm, and said: “Sarojini Naidu, you are under arrest.” She haughtily shook off his hand and said: “I’ll come, but don’t touch me.” The crowd cheered frantically as she strode with the British officer across the open space to the barbed-wire stockade, where she was interned. Later she was sentenced to prison. Manilal Gandhi was also arrested.

In the middle of the morning V. J. Patel arrived. He had been leading the Swaraj movement since Gandhi’s arrest, and had just resigned as President of the Indian Legislative Assembly in protest against the British. Scores surrounded him, knelt, and kissed his feet. He was a venerable gentleman of about sixty with white flowing beard and mustache, dressed in the usual undyed, coarse homespun smock. Sitting on the ground under a mango tree, Patel said: “All hope of reconciling India with the British Empire is lost forever. I can understand any government’s taking people into custody and punishing them for breaches of the law, but I cannot understand how any government that calls itself civilized could deal as savagely and brutally with nonviolent, unresisting men as the British have this morning.”

By eleven the heat reached 116 in the shade and activities of the Gandhi volunteers subsided. I went back to the temporary hospital to examine the wounded. They lay in rows on the bare ground in the shade of an open, palm-thatched shed. I counted 320 injured, many still insensible with fractured skulls, others writhing in agony from kicks in the testicles and stomach. The Gandhi men had been able to gather only a few native doctors, who were doing the best they could with the inadequate facilities. Scores of the injured had received no treatment for hours and two had died. The demonstration was finished for the day on account of the heat . . .
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