

This Day in History... March 12, 1930

Gandhi's Salt March

On March 12, 1930, Gandhi started his 240-mile Salt March as a nonviolent protest against British rule in India. Gandhi's march helped inspire widespread civil disobedience in India, bringing international attention to their cause.

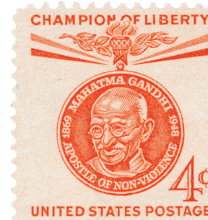
Britain's Salt Act of 1882 banned Indians from collecting or selling salt, which was an important part of their diet. Instead, they had to buy salt from the British, who had monopoly on the product, and instituted a high tax. The tax was especially difficult for the poor, but it negatively impacted all Indians.

Meanwhile, India native Mohandas Gandhi had discovered his calling in the 1890s while living in South Africa. He believed acts of civil disobedience were key in the fight against discrimination, to "root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process." Gandhi launched his first campaign of civil

disobedience, which he called "Satyagraha" ("truth and firmness") in 1906 to combat the limited rights of Indians. He led the peaceful protests for several years until he and hundreds of other were arrested and briefly imprisoned. He helped to negotiate their release as well as the recognition of Hindu marriages and end of poll taxes on Indians.

Gandhi later became a leader of the Indian home-rule movement, seeking independence from Great Britain. He encouraged his fellow countrymen to stop working for the British, attending their schools, paying their taxes, and purchasing their goods. He got a portable spinning wheel to make his own clothes, which became a symbol of Indian self-reliance.

This stamp paid the international rate to "carry the message of freedom around the world."

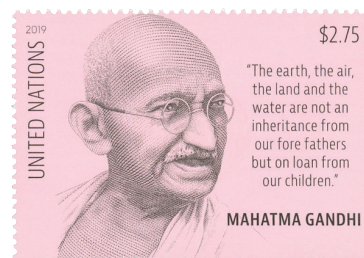


The 10th stamp in the Champions of Liberty Series.

In 1930, Gandhi turned his attention to the Salt Acts. On March 2, he sent a letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin informing him that he and his followers were going to break the Salt Laws in 10 days. Then on March 12, Gandhi and a few dozen followers left their religious retreat at Sabermanti. They embarked on a 24-day, 240-mile march to the Arabian Sea where they planned to make salt from seawater in defiance of the law. Gandhi addressed large crowds along the way and each day, more people joined the march. When they reached Dandi on April 5, the crowd had grown to include tens of thousands of people.

The next day, Gandhi went down to the salt flats on the beach where he planned to collect the crystallized sea salt. However, the police knew he was coming and crushed the salt into the mud. Undeterred, Gandhi picked up some of the salt, in direct defiance of the law. Then thousands of his followers in Dandi and nearby coastal towns started making salt. This sparked widespread civil disobedience across India, with millions taking part. The British police ended up arresting more than 60,000 people, including Gandhi, but those who weren't arrested continued their acts of civil disobedience. Another salt march was organized in May and the protesters were beaten by the police, which caused international outrage.

After Gandhi was released from prison in January 1931, he met with the viceroy and promised to end the disobedience if he would get to participate in the upcoming conference concerning India's future. That August he attended the conference, though it made little progress. Gandhi continued to advocate for India's independence, which was finally achieved in 1947, just six months before Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu nationalist.



2019 UN New York Office stamp issued for Gandhi's 150th birthday.

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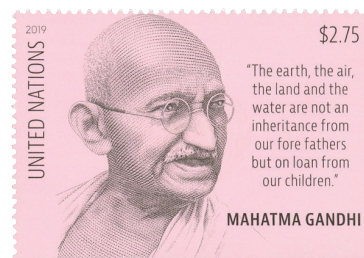


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