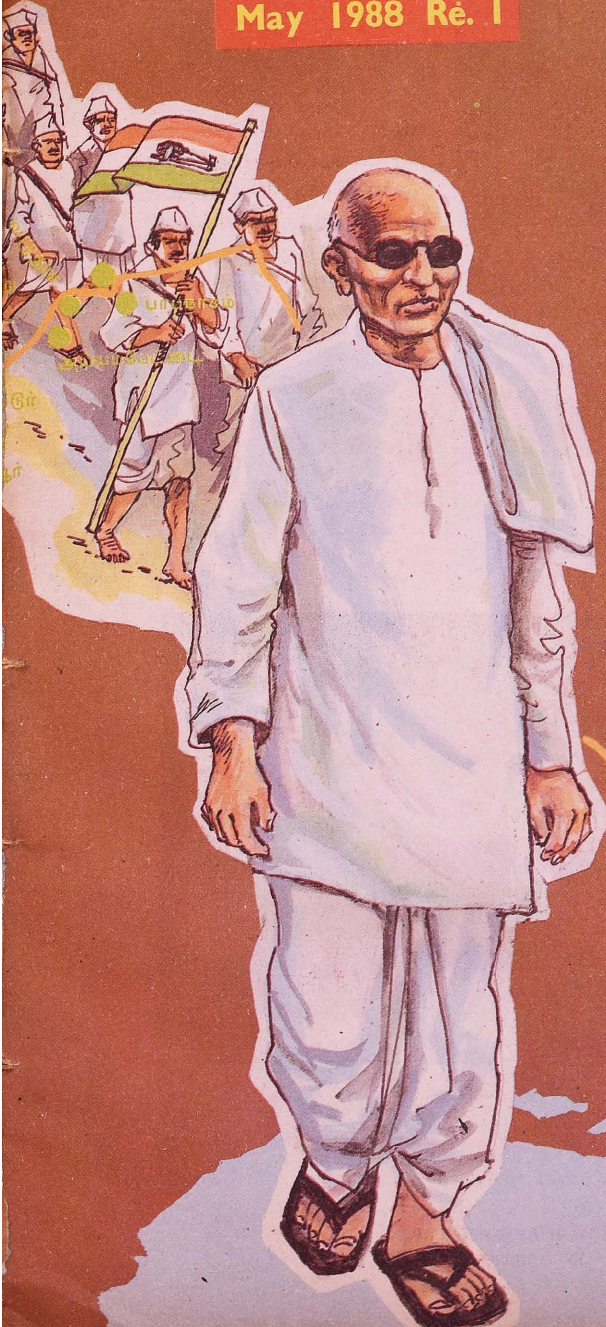


# Tamil Arasu

May 1988 Re. 1



திருத்துறைப்பூண்டி

தகடூர்

மருதூர்

ஆயக்காரன்புலம்

Vedaranyam

BAY OF BENGAL

## Re-enactment of the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha



His Excellency the Vice President,  
Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma and  
His Excellency the Governor  
Dr. P.C. Alexander with some  
of the participants of the  
Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha  
of 1930 (13.4.88, TIRUCHY)



The participants of the Re-enactment being greeted by His Excellency  
the Vice President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma. (13.4.88, TIRUCHY)

# Tamil Arasu

*Presents This month*



## The Re-enactment of the Vedaranyam Salt Yatra

In the early hours of the Tamil New Year day on the April 13th 1988 began the Re-enactment of one of the forceful events in India's modern history - The historic salt yatra of 1930 led by Rajaji. The programme organised as part of the Nation's 40th anniversary celebrations of Independence is a successful attempt to bring in a revival of the spirit of the pre-Independence years, to forge India towards greater unity.

**The Cover story**

## The Dandi Yatra

Gandhiji's Dandi Yatra was the turning point in India's Struggle for Independence and the inspiration for the Vedaranyam Salt Yatra. The Re-enactment of the Dandi Yatra was completed recently.

**An in-depth report**

**Thiruvalluvar Year 2019**

**May 1988 Re. I**



# “Gandhiji’s Salt Satyagraha was for the poor, the deprived and the handicapped of our country”

—Prime Minister Thiru Rajiv Gandhi

The message of truth and non-violence is as relevant today as it was during the freedom movement.

Those who participated in the recent padayatra and those crores of Indians who watched them participate and remembered Gandhiji’s great padyatra will remember also the values of truth and non-violence for which Gandhiji lived and for which Gandhiji died.

The other great practical lesson which Gandhiji taught us through the salt satyagraha was to focus our attention on the poorest of the poor. He said the only form of worship he knew was the worship of *daridra-narayana*.

It is that kind of profound understanding of the poor that we need as much in India today as when Gandhiji set out on his padayatra nearly 60 years ago. It is the poor and the deprived, the disadvantaged and the handicapped who must remain the focus of our concern, the object of our work.

Freedom can be won only by taking up the cause of the poorest as the highest national cause. Today we must remember that we can make our country great only by making the poorest in our land great. There is no honour that this country can win, no power that this country can hold, no glory that this country can attain unless it honours its poorest citizens, unless it builds the power of its citizen, unless it makes the glory of its poorest citizen the proof of the glory of India.

Let all those who marched to Dandi and all those crores of Indians who watched their progress over



the next 25 days remember that the cause for which Gandhiji marched is the cause for which we are still working namely the cause of all the poor, all the deprived, all the disadvantaged and all the handicapped of our country.

We can build our nation only on the basis of unity. Our unity does not mean dissolving our different cultures into a single solution.

The greatness of the unity of India is that each of us retains his particular cultural identity while belonging to the larger entity called India. This has been our genius for 5000 years.

We have had the genius to nourish and respect all our different languages, cultures and religions while going beyond those particular difference to a sense of the larger unity of India.

So Gandhiji’s padyatra to Dandi was not only to ask the British to leave or to give the world a lesson in principled non-violence or even to serve the cause of the poorest. It was also a living demonstration to the people of India that, notwithstanding the glorious diversity of our country, all the castes and religions, regions and languages of India were merged together in fighting for freedom.

Let those who have marched to Dandi and those of us who watched this pilgrim progress remember once again that it was through unity that we ended slavery. It is only through unity that we will be able to build our nation, eradicate poverty, ensure justice and give India back her place in the vanguard of human civilisation.

Today, every aspect of Gandhiji’s constructive work remains as relevant to nation building as it was to the fight for freedom.

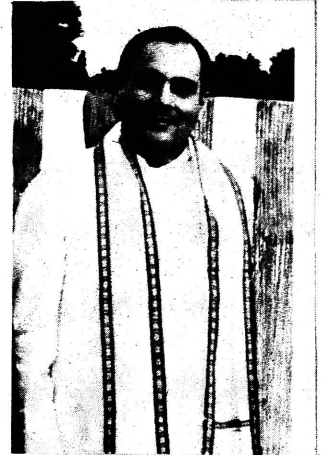
Today as then, we have to be self reliant.

Today, as then, we must recognise the dignity of labour.

Today, as then, we have to work for the uplift of the weaker sections of our society.

Today, as then, we have to work towards the emancipation of women.

Gandhiji also defined a true satyagrahi. There is no satyagraha involved in breaking the law and running away. There is no satyagraha involved in throwing stones, damaging public property or setting buses on fire. There is certainly no satyagraha involved in inciting communal passions, resorting to violence or encouraging terrorism. All these methods are the ways of cowards. A coward can never make a true satyagrahi.



We have won our freedom but we are still building the new India. As we build the new India perhaps the single biggest drag on us is our indiscipline.

It is our privilege as Indians to be the inheritors of one of the greatest traditions of human civilisation. It is our privilege as Indians to belong to the only country to have demonstrated the strength of non-violence over violence. It is our privilege as Indians to be the direct descendants of Gandhiji and his noble companions in the war of Independence. In all humility, let us prove worthy of them.

# Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha (1930)

## The Glorious Re-enactment



**"It is national unity and humanism that can best, and most fully energise our progress. Come what may, we are one as we have been for thousands of years, and one we shall remain. On that depends the true materialisation of the dreams of our freedom fighters whose courage, philosophy and sacrifice we commemorate today", His Excellency, the Vice President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma said while inaugurating the Re-enactment at Tiruchi on 13th April 1988**



Describing Mahatma Gandhi and Rajaji as worthy sons of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, His Excellency the Vice-President, said "Dandi and Vedaranyam are sanctified by their touch. They symbolise for us the cherished destination of our pilgrims. The salt of our freedom was gathered there."

He was inaugurating the re-enactment of the Tiruchirapalli - Vedaranyam salt satyagraha march from the same spot from where Rajaji led it in 1930. Dr. Sharma declared, "Today is the auspicious beginning of New Year—Pudu

Vērusham. It is celebrated as Baisakhi in Punjab. Today is also the anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. It is a day of deep and mystic importance to India."

Today we renew our solidarity, our sense of personal responsibility and our devotion to motherland", he said.

"It is national unity and humanism that can best, and most fully, energise our progress. Come what may, we are one as we have been for thousands of years, and one we shall remain. On that depends the true materialisation of the dreams of our

freedom fighters whose courage, philosophy and sacrifice we commemorate today", he said while inaugurating the re-enactment at 5 a.m. the same time when Rajaji launched the march in 1930.

After leading the 100 marchers for about 200 metres, the Vice-President and the Tamil Nadu Governor, Dr. P.C. Alexander,





addressed a public meeting at the military ground.

Dr. Sharma said, "a chosen few of our fellow country men are setting forth today, on foot to traverse the path that 58 years ago advanced our nation towards freedom. It is a path that has been

lighted by the radiance of the human spirit and the glory of sacrifice in the cause of nation. Every step of the march from Tiruchi to Vedaranyam represented a mission of historic importance asserting the will of the people for freedom, humanism and true progress."

"This path represents the humanist way of life to which we Indians are committed from ancient times from the North to the West Coast, from the South to the East Coast. It is an approach in keeping with the brilliant ideals eternally relevant to India as well as to the rest of humankind. Our ethos of





powerful nationalist thought, secularism, and democratic socialism emanates from these ideals. Our struggle for freedom was fired by these ideals”.

Dr. Sharma pointed out that it was the youth who heeded the call of the Mahatma and contributed a vital force to the movement for national liberation.

Emphasising that the revolution that was brought about by the labours of our freedom fighters must not cease with the attainment of our independence, Dr. Sharma observed that ours was a continuing revolu-

tion aspiring for the transformation of the country in consonance with the secular, socialist, democratic, and nationalist ideals for the upliftment of our people from the misery of poverty and the gloom of despair.

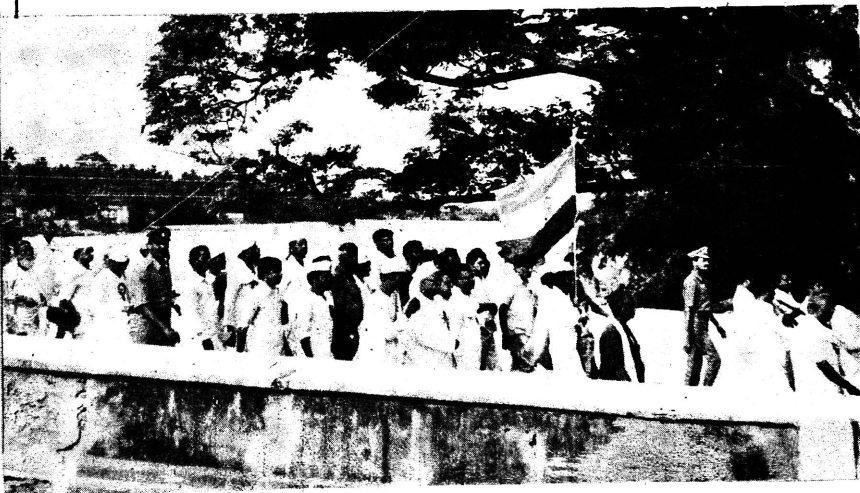
His Excellency, the Governor Dr. Alexander welcomed the gathering. He concluded his two minutes speech in Tamil quoting Bharathiar, “Vazhia Senthamizh.... Vande Matharam”.

The Vice-President then honoured four of the 15 survivors who were associates of Rajaji in the 1930 march. Those honoured

were Messrs. A.N. Sivaraman, R.S.Ramakrishnan, A.Subramaniam and N.A.V. Pathy.

The function commenced with the singing of Bhajans and Bharathiyar songs. The Vice-President joined in the singing of “Raghupathi Raghava.”

The Vice-President’s English speech was translated into Tamil by Dr. V.C. Kulandaiswamy, Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, Madras Mr. A. Padmanabhan, I.A.S. Adviser to the Governor, proposed a vote of thanks.





# Epic March of Vedaranyam

“ Vedaranyam seems to have been chosen, because it was the place where Vallabhbhai Patel had in 1920 presided over the Tamil-Nadu Congress Conference; it was also favourably situated near the Agastyampalli salt factory and the well-known salt swamp producing natural salt in abundance and it was the home of Vedaratnam Pillai, an active congress worker. Further it was a place of pilgrimage. ”

The salt marches of Vedaranyam which had witnessed only the dance of the flamingoes and the desolate cries of the seagulls were to witness a different kind of activity in 1930—the salt march, the forerunner to many a non-violent battle for independence and civil-disobedience movements which were by themselves against the tyranny of the British rule in India.

In 1930, Gandhiji made an offer to the then Viceroy of India whereby he assured that he would not press on with civil disobedience, if the British Government would accept his Eleven Points. The latter included: reduction in land revenue, abolition of salt tax, release of political prisoners and levy of duty on foreign cloth. The British Government considered the Eleven Points to be too unrealistic and paid scant attention to Gandhiji's demand.

In January 1930, Gandhiji told Tagore that he was furiously thinking 'night and day' regarding action to be taken and said he would make a call for the celebrations of 'Independence Day', on January, 26th. On that day in the towns and villages of India, hundreds of thousands of people took a pledge that to submit to British rule was a crime against man and God. The people under-

took to join a campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes if the Congress Party launched such a move. The enthusiasm of the people rose to a such high pitch on Independence Day when Gandhiji came to believe that time was ripe for a mass movement. He immediately suggested the inauguration of the movement with the breach of the Salt laws.

To this move, the first impulse of the British Government was to ridicule 'the kindergarden stage of political revolution' and to laugh away the idea that the King-Emperor could be unseated by boiling seawater in a kettle. The Government did not take the breach of the salt tax seriously and even Gandhiji's close adherents doubted whether the salt satyagraha would succeed.

But Gandhi knew his terrain. The British Government had imposed a tax on salt and this was particularly burdensome to the peasants. Salt was the one commodity that the poor man used more often than the rich. His daily requirements were more; for he worked in the fields under the scorching sun. For the average farmer, the annual tax was equivalent to three days' income. In a grain of salt Gandhi had found the perfect symbol of freedom. To oppose the salt laws would be to assert, a simple, elementary human right.

Before launching the satyagraha, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy in which he noted as follows: "if my letter makes no appeal to your

heart, on the eleventh day of this month, I shall proceed, with such co-workers of this ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of the salt laws". The Viceroy's reply was brief: it expressed its regret at Mr. Gandhi's contemplating a course of action which was closely bound to involve the violation of the law and danger to public peace." "On bended knee, I asked for bread, said Gandhiji, "I received a stone instead."

At 6.30 A.M. on March 12, 1930, Gandhiji began the 241 mile epic march to Dandi. The Seventy nine Satyagrahis included scholars, newspaper editors, harijans and weavers. The people of Ahmedabad had turned out in their thousands to cheer them. He announced that he would not return to Sabarmati Ashram until the salt tax was repealed.

"Watch", Gandhiji had said. "I will give a signal to the nation," Uneasily the world watched. On the night of April 5th, the marchers reached the Dandi beach. "God willing, I expect to commence actual civil disobedience at 6.30 in the morning with my companions", said Gandhiji. At sunrise, having spent most of the night in prayer, he walked into the sea, then returning to shore, picked up some salt left from evaporated sea water.

From Dandi, where he had made the first symbolic breach of the salt laws, Gandhi sent a message



that "at present Indian self-respect is symbolised, as it were, in a handful of salt in the satyagrahi's hand" "Let the fist be broken but let there be no surrender of salt." Gandhiji wrote, "I want world sympathy in this battle of right against might." On May 5th, Gandhiji was arrested. Just before his arrest Gandhiji had planned to raid the salt depots at Dharsana. The salt depots were raided on 21st May by other leaders. They were arrested and the rank and file beaten up. Webb Miller, an American correspondent reported: "In no case did I see a volunteer—all told there were two thousand five hundred of them—even raise an arm to deflect the blows, obviously it was their purpose to force the police to beat them. In eighteen years of reporting, in twenty two countries, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana. Sometimes the scenes were so painful that I had to turn away momentarily. One surprising feature was the discipline of volunteers. It seemed they were thoroughly imbued with Gandhiji's non-violence creed."

When Gandhi gave the clarion call to the Dandi March, in the south, the nefarious salt law was breached at Vedaranyam. The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in a resolution passed at Vellore said that under the leadership of C. Rajagopalachari, the historic march would start from the house of Dr. T.S.S. Rajan on 13-4-1930, Tamil New Year's Day and reach Vedaranyam.

Vedaranyam seems to have been chosen, because it was the place where Vallabh Bhai Patel had in 1920 presided over the Tamil Nadu Congress Conference; it was favourably situated near the Agastyampalli salt factory and the well known salt swamp producing natural salt in abundance, and it was the home of Vedaratnam Pillai, an active Congress worker. Further it was a place of pilgrimage and the march to it would invest the whole campaign with a religious significance.

In March 1930, Rajaji issued an appeal for funds and volunteers and toured throughout Thanjavur addressing meetings at various places to prepare the ground for his march. Volunteers hurried to his side from several districts in the State and Rajaji then sent an advance guard to go along the route of the march to arrange for accommodation and supplies at suitable halts and also to rouse the sympathies of the people. In this as in all other work connected with the campaign he found able lieutenants in Dr. T.S.S. Rajan, Secretary to the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Thirumathi Lakshmpathi, the organizer of the



Thiruvaiyar to Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Mannargudi, Tiruthurai-poondi, and from then on to Vedaranyam.

The following account by G. Narayana Iyengar describes the epic story.

"The satyagrahis reached the Thanjavur border, the then Collector of the district Mr. Thorne issued an



Madras League of youth, Thiru Panthulu Ayyar, a former member of the Legislative Council and a man of position and repute of Kumbakonam and in some other Congress workers. The march was planned to begin from Tiruchirappalli, the headquarters of the Congress, and to pass through the Grand Anaicut and

“To Mahatma's move towards the inauguration of a movement to breach the Salt Laws, the first impulse of the Government was to ridicule 'the kindergarten stage of political revolution' and to laugh away the idea that the King-Emperor could be unseated by boiling sea-water in a kettle.”

order that it was an offence to harbour any satyagrahi. But the veteran patriot, the late Panthulu Iyer of Kumbakonam, defied this order and entertained the satyagrahis in his own house. Not only this, but contrary to Rajaji's instructions he gave them a regular feast including payasam. When the group had their food, there was some delay in serving payasam after rasam. One satyagrahi sang a song of Ramalingaswamy in which the Almighty is described as sugar candy, honey and so on.





When he finished his song Rajaji with a smile on his face said 'probably by singing this song the friend wanted to remind the host that the next item of the menu is payasam.' The whole gathering roared with laughter. Everyone admired Rajaji's sense of humour. After the party had left the place, Pantulu Iyer was arrested and sent to jail."

Some more details are given by Dr. T.S.S. Rajan in his reminiscences : The distance to be covered in the march was about 150 miles. The number of satyagrahis was limited to one hundred to keep the need for food and accommodation within limits. About ten miles were covered each day. The Satyagrahis slept on the sands of the Cauvery one night. Though the Collector's threats had no effect on the major part of the population, some people were afraid or did not wish to defy the authorities openly. Such people kept packets of food on the trees on the marchers' way and gave the satyagrahis all the

**"In no case did I see a volunteer—all told there were two thousand-five hundred of them—even raise an arm to deflect the blows, obviously it was their purpose to force the police to beat them. In eighteen years of reporting, in twenty two countries, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana"**

—Webb Miller, a newsman

food they could have asked for. When the principal resident of one village Periyappaiyan Chawadi disappeared from the place as the satyagrahis arrived, his brave wife stayed on and received them and gave them food and looked after them.

Rajaji was of course arrested as expected, and tried, and sentenced to six months imprisonment. He had nominated K. Santanam to succeed him as leader. Santanam nominated Mattappani Venkatarama Aiyar, he Subramanyam, and he G. Ramachandran. The police arrested all the leaders. Rajan kept himself out of the open programme for some time but went to Vedarnyam later and was arrested.

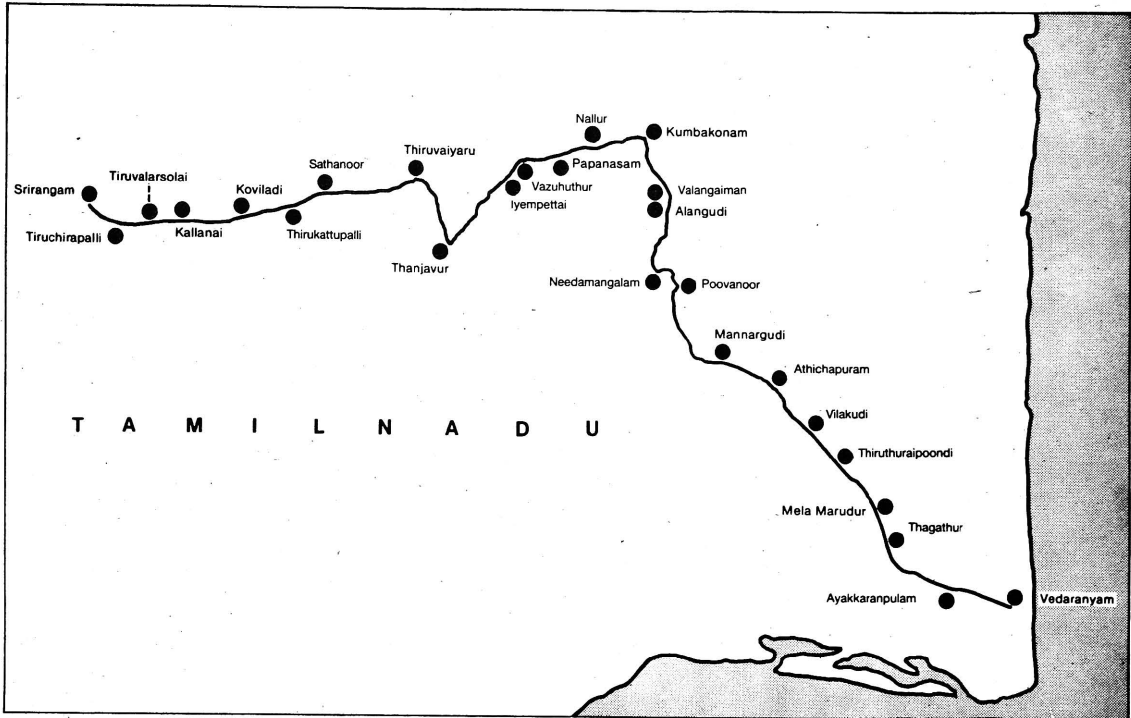
What the march meant to Rajaji himself was stated by him later in a note he prepared for the Congress session of 1935. So "when on Tamil New Year's Day at Dr Rajan's house in Tiruchirapalli on the 13th April, 1930 we started on our march to the Salt beds at Vedaranyam, and Dr. Rajan's daughter put the red powder on my face in silent prayer, we were prepared for a course of suffering in advance of what men and women had hitherto undergone in the cause of Indian freedom. We had given up titles, professions, colleges and careers but now we were out to face worse trials than those of voluntary poverty".

It would appear, that the Collector Thorne episode had in a personal sense, a happy ending. In the same note on the march by Rajaji we have the following paragraph.

Though it was to be seventeen years before India became formally independent, freedom for India was inevitable from the moment Gandhi stooped on the beach at Dandi for a handful of salt.



# The Route of the Vedaranyam Satyagrahis



## Do you know...

... that the salt lifted by Gandhiji from the beach was sold to a Dr. Kanugu, the highest bidder, for 1600 rupees.

.... a hundred thousand were arrested as the aftermath of Salt Satyagraha, in India.

... despite the collector's ban order at Thanjavur, 20,000 people were present to hear Rajaji's address.

.... Over the three hundred village headmen gave up their Government posts in the area traversed by Gandhiji during salt satyagraha.

.... Rajaji had a toe-infection when he undertook the Salt March and that he walked barefoot for three days.



# THE MARCH THAT LED TO FREEDOM

## Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha (1930)

### Under Rajaji's Leadership



### The Beginning

Hundreds had assembled at the unusual hour to witness a going out to war. When the marchers took their first deliberate steps there was a complete hush. Tears trickled down the faces of some onlookers. After a few seconds the notes of a song could be heard. 'Kathiyinri Rathaminri', the marchers were singing. 'Sans sword sans blood.' The verse had been composed for the occasion by poet Thiru Ramalingam Pillai.

C.R. had not walked long when he was shown the morning's paper carrying Thorne's order against 'harbouring.' Without pausing or slowing down, C.R. dictated, to accompanying press reporters, a fresh answer. He knew, he said, his people and their tradition of hospitality better than a British officer did. The order, he predicted, would enlarge the public's welcome. With a twinkle he added, 'Thorns and thistles' cannot stem this tide of freedom.'

In the beginning it looked as if Thorne's strategy might work. At Koviladi, on the second day of the march, the party found the 'chhatram' pilgrims' innbarred and bolted against them. C.R. was invited to a private home and the rest slept on the bed of the Cauvery.

'Stretching out everywhere, the Cauvery serves us like a great friend and mother.' CR. wrote his children. 'She assists with our lodging and our washing. On her sands thousands attend our meetings,

With the kind courtesy of:

Rajmohan Gandhi's book,  
The warrior from the South.

women-talk coming in great numbers.' 'When I see you 2 or 2½ years hence,' C.R. adjured Narasimhan and Lakshmi, 'you should receive me smiling.'

Koviladi was not a pointer. In the halts that followed the marchers were joyously hailed. They walked under welcome arches, on roads sprinkled with water and to the cheers of crowds that were getting bigger and bigger.

More important, they were fed and housed. Thorne's directives which he reinforced by personally visiting, ahead of the marchers, some of their halts—were defied or defeated. Those who openly gave hospitality knew the consequences—jail terms and fines—and received them. Others, too, found ways of helping. A nameless host, in one place, hung bundles of food on trees the marchers could not miss. Eventually C.R. had to appeal against pampering the satyagrahis.

Neither soldiers nor sanyasis, the marchers yet bore a resemblance to both. Walking five miles in the morning and five in the evening—past ricefields or groves of banana or coconut, with the Cauvery, journeying seaward, often by their side, they took with them a way of life.

At stops they fraternised with 'untouchables' in their hutments refrained from entering temples—because they were closed to the 'untouchables'.—swept village streets and spoke up for Hindu-Muslim unity and against drink. And at two crowded meetings a day they preached the gospel of non-violent revolt.

Reporting to the Government of Madras the 'extraordinarily vigorous propaganda' along the route, Thorne claimed, 'with all respect', that he had been right in suggesting C.R.'s early arrest and added that 'harm to the prestige of Government has been done by the march.'

Though a toe infection obliged him to walk barefoot for two or three days, C.R. stood the journey well. In the thick of it he remembered to ask about 'the anti-drink work around the Ashram.' 'I am anxious only about that,' he wrote.

In response to persistent campaigning by C.R., toddy shops had lately been closed in the Ashram area, which as a result no longer saw 'reeling villagers staggering on the road.'

At Tanjore town, Thorne's post of command, a brother and sister gave, in C.R.'s words, 'shelter and noble hospitality,' but C.R.'s heart sank when he found that nothing had been prepared for the evening meeting; no one, he was told, was ready to take responsibility. A lawyer finally offered C.R. a rickety old table; with the help of the lawyer's gardener, C.R. had it moved to the meeting site.

Not a soul was to be seen there—and C. R. was prepared for 'a miserable failure.' 'After all it is Thorne's headquarters,' C. R. thought, 'and we may yield to him at least in one battle.'

But when C.R. and his team marched down at the appointed hour they saw a surging mass of humanity. Before C.R. spoke—'with a heart moved to the depths'—the 20,000 present prayed in complete silence.

In Kumbakonam, Panthulu Iyer, ex-member of the Legislative Council, kept all the marchers for two nights in his house and fed them. He was jailed for six months. Next, in Semmangudi, C.R. learnt that a few government servants were in the welcoming crowd. This kind of courage meant, he told the throng, that freedom had already arrived. As expected, the officials lost their jobs.

While C.R. was addressing a meeting in Tiruthuraiipoondi, Ramachandra Naidu was arrested for having fed the satyagrahis. The multitude remained calm. Gandhian teaching had been imbibed.

A mighty crowd was waiting in Vedaranyam, when the satyagrahis reached on April 28, the sixteenth day of the march. After saying that he was taking the welcome address as read and the garlands as worn, a tired but smiling C.R. declared that he would break the salt law on the 30th and expect others to break it thereafter.



## THE TEAM FOR VEDARANYAM

“The eventual regiment—the 'hundred gems,' as they came to be called—included a man from each Tamil district, seven youths resigning handsome Bombay jobs, an engineering college lecturer and a railway official, the last two also sacrificing their posts. To the free India of the future the group was to contribute an editor, an ambassador, a union minister, five Chief Ministers and more.”

## The Drama of Rajaji's Arrest

Almost immediately after they reached the swamp and, beginning with C.R. every body bent down and picked up some salt, the Superintendent of Police, Govindan Nair, was on the scene. He was supported by some officers and fifty constables. C.R. and others holding salt were told to surrender it. On their refusal Nair arrested C.R.

Resolved to prevent demonstrations of sympathy, Thorne had arranged for a quick, secluded trial in a salt shed near the sea, and a quiet despatch of the prisoner by





the 8.35 a.m. train from Agastyam-palli station. He had also instructed that all telegrams relating to the arrest be withheld till evening.

Nair fetched a bucket of water for C.R. to wash his salty hands and sandy feet before being tried. Ponnuswamy Pillai, the judge brought to the shed, had been in Salem during C.R.'s lawyer days. The prosecutor was inefficient; never at a loss in a court, C.R. helped him out.

The sentence was six months rigorous imprisonment plus a Rs. 200 fine or another three months. C.R. said he would prefer the additional term. Pillai had given out his verdict calmly, but when it came to signing the jail warrant he broke down and wept.

The proceedings had been speedy but not brisk enough for the prisoner to be placed on the 8.35 a.m. train. Thorne's officers had let their chief down. By the time the next train left, carrying C.R. to Tiruchy, word of his arrest had spread.

## C.R. at Prison

C.R. spent three weeks, as convict number 5557, in Tiruchy Central Jail where at six each evening he was locked inside a small cell in which the only 'means of ingress for air', was 'a small ventilator about 2 ft. by 1 ft. barred and wirenetted.' He felt he had been 'deprived of a reasonable measure of fresh air and sleep'. From Tiruchy C.R. was moved for two weeks to the Madras Penitentiary and thence to Bellary Central Jail.



The summer is long, hot and exacting in Bellary, but C.R.'s four months there had positive aspects. He was in the company of intelligent young satyagrahis. They were eager to learn. C.R. was glad to teach.

The jailor 'knew how to deal with gentlemen as well as to keep within the rules'; he gave C.R. full freedom to hold classes and prayer meetings.

C.R. covered a wide range of subjects, mostly chosen by the young men; the lives of great men, of trees and bees, stars and atoms; also Bolshevism, untouchability and the national debt. One of the 'students' took down the talks in shorthand; they were published in 1931 as "Chats Behind Bars."

Though awarded nine months in all, C.R. in fact served a sentence of five months and eleven days. After he had been consigned to prison the Government discovered that the penalty for not paying the Rs. 200 fine should have been six weeks, not three months; it would seem, moreover, that about ten weeks were remitted.

Released on October 10th, C.R. forthwith addressed a Bellary gathering and attacked the new ordinances. They merely made 'clear to the world the reality of Indian revolt.' The movement, he claimed, would feed on the 'fresh vitaminous dishes' which the Viceroy had 'cooked and made ready.'



This memorial pillar, erected by the Tiruchy Municipality 12 years ago, stands on the spot from where the historic march to Vedaranyam started under Rajaji's leadership on April 13, 1930.



# Vedaranyam Salt March - A Flash back



Thiru G. Ramachandran, the founder of Gandhigram Rural University, has been through the thick of the freedom movement. He has been associated with many veteran national leaders. Here, in this article, he narrates his experience in the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha.



The Vedaranyam Salt March took place 58 years ago, but I still remember it vividly. Tiruchirappalli buzzed with activity. Volunteers for the March poured in from all over Tamil Nadu.

In the early hours of the 13th April, we had gathered at Dr.T.S.S.Rajan's house at Tiruchi cantonment. There were over a hundred of us. The morning air resounded with the strains of the song "Raghupathy Raghava Rajaram, Pathitha Pavana Sitaram".

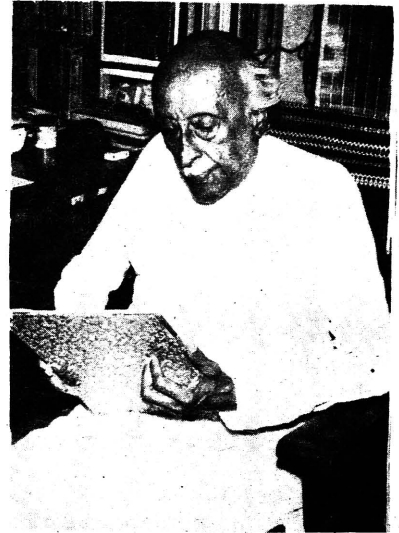
The March commenced under the saintly leadership of Rajaji. Step by step, step by step, we followed.

We had just left Tiruchi when Rajaji was informed of the orders of Thorne, the District Collector of Thanjavur: "Anyone supporting or helping the Marchers was liable for imprisonment and fine". A cynical smile spread on Rajaji's face. He said "I know my people.....this proclamation is going to add to my embarrassment because it will redouble the enthusiasm of the people". He added,..... "Neither Thorne nor thistles are going to stop us."

Indeed, his words were prophetic.

Throughout the March, we received unprecedented support and hospitality from the people en route. We reached Vedaranyam on the 28th April. A large crowd had gathered to meet us—with garlands. It moved us. Rajaji said "Keep all the garlands. My neck is too weak to carry all the garlands you give me, but remember, to-day you rejoice but tomorrow you will have to face the crisis. The Police are all round. They are watching us. I will be arrested and taken away. But you have to stand up to the test afterwards. Keep non-violence, let none of you raise your finger against the Police as they arrest you or lathi-charge you or beat you down. Stand erect like Tamil people—You are very proud of being a Tamilian". He was the embodiment of Tamil Culture—a few words but they sank deep into the hearts of the listeners.

Early next morning, Rajaji defied the Salt Law at one of the swamps. He was arrested by Govinda Menon, the Superintendent of Police. It was ironic as Menon had known Rajaji personally and had highest reverence for him. It was observed as a day of silent prayer at Vedaranyam. Shop and business establishments remained closed. From the next day onwards, the Salt Laws confirmed to be defied.



The hundred of us who had accompanied Rajaji set up a small camp at Vedaranyam—I remember the people in the camp very distinctly. There was Sardar Vedaratnam Pillai, a Salt merchant on whose invitation Rajaji had come to Vedaranyam. He was arrested. There was K.Santhanam who later became a Minister in the Central Government. He too was arrested. Then, of course, there was Mattapparai Venkatarama Iyer - the lion of a man, with big whiskers, a Brahmin but Kshatriya by character. The British did not spare him either. He auctioned the Satyagraha salt—Freedom Salt, as we called it—made into small packets worth 10 paise but we sold them at Rs. 10, Rs. 20/- and Rs. 30/-

Salt continued to be collected at Vedaranyam and the Police were losing their patience. Volunteers were mercilessly beaten up. But we refused to give up. As the arrests went on, the number of Volunteers dwindled to 50.





“ Keep all the garlands. My neck is too weak to carry all the garlands you give me but remember, today you rejoice but tomorrow you will have to face the crisis. The police are all around. They are watching us. I will be arrested and taken away. But you have to stand the test afterwards. Keep non-violence, let none of you raise your finger—one finger against the police, as they arrest you or lathicharge you or beat you down. Stand erect like Tamil people—you are very proud of being a Tamilian”



—Rajaji

I remember clearly the day when we were all arrested. We had collected a large quantity of salt and brought it to the camp. The Police got mind of this and a small unit led by an Inspector charged into the Camp. Mrs. Rukmani Lakshmiopathy (who later became the Deputy Chairman of the Madras Legislature) covered the salt with her hands

and the rest of us sat around her in a circle holding hands. She was our valuable leader and comrade. The Police wanted to seize the salt as it was “Contraband”. We told the Police “This is Freedom Salt. You will not take it away unless you do so over our dead body”. Dr. T.S.S. Rajan and K.Vaidyanatha Iyer from Madurai were part of our group.

The trial was conducted by a local Magistrate. I was sentenced to a rigorous imprisonment and being the leader of the Camp, I was also fined Rs. 500/- and to realise the fine, the utensils and other items in the Camp were confiscated.

But next only to the Dandi March, the Vedaranyam Salt March will remain in the movement of our Freedom as one of the conspicuous land marks.

My message is very simple. In repeating the Satyagraha, you are repeating the Freedom Movement of India—a crucial juncture in our history. Please remember it was Rajaji who led the struggle at Vedaranyam. As you march forward, remember that fragile figure, that saintly man who made history in South India. You are the proud repetitioners of one of the crusade battles in our Freedom Movement. As you March on, keep all the rectitude which Rajaji had given to us in the March and as you go on in the March, speak to the people of what India is to-day, how it emerged into Freedom—and what under the new circumstances, the people of India particularly in Tamil Nadu, what they have to do to make India strong, united and great

## Gandhiji's Arrest

The police officials arrived at midnight, accompanied by thirty men with readied guns. In the darkness it was impossible for them to make out Gandhi anywhere, or guess where he might be hiding. At last someone pointed out a little white bundle in one of the open sheds. “That is Gandhiji”. In the midst of the confusion, the leader of this national earthquake was sleeping like a baby, absolutely certain that the Lord would take care of him.

The British official awakened the sleeper and shone a flashlight

into his face. “We have come to arrest Mr. M.K. Gandhi.”

“I am Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,” the little figure answered politely, “I am at your service.”



“Please get your things ready. We will give you the time you need.”

“I am ready now,” said Gandhi indicating the small bundle on the floor. “This is all I need.”

While the policemen watched he set about brushing his few teeth in his usual unhurried way. Then after a short prayer he turned to the official in charge and walked briskly to the car outside, chatting cheerfully to his escorts. He knew that it might be years before he returned, yet there was no trace of apprehension or resentment in his manner. The police were so impressed by the simple dignity of this little man that they seemed to be not his jailers but his prisoners. He was at his very best when being persecuted. He was at his strongest when under pressure. And he was free whether inside prison or out.



# Gandhiji's

words of wisdom



**"A satyagrahi bids goodbye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting the opponent. Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the satyagrahi is ready to trust him the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed."**

**"In satyagraha, it is never the numbers that count; it is always the quality, more so when the forces of violence are uppermost."**

**"Then it is often forgotten that it is never the intention of a satyagrahi to embarrass the wrongdoer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is,**

**must be, always to his heart. The satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer. He should avoid artificiality in all his doings. He acts naturally and from inward conviction."**

**"Satyagraha is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result of anger or malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, never vociferous. It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence."**

**If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.**

**As truth and ahimsa are not merely for the chosen few, so exactly, is self-control not merely for a few but for the whole of humanity.**

**Death is at any time blessed, it is twice blessed for a warrior who dies for his cause, that is, Truth.**

**Hatred ever kills, love never dies.**

**It is my conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence.**

**True suffering does not know itself and never calculates. It brings its own joy, which surpasses all other joys.**

**Non-violence is the essence of discipline.**

**You need not be afraid that the method of non-violence is a slow longdrawnout process. It is the swiftest the world has seen for, it is the surest.**

**Satyagraha is a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth.**

**Non-violence is like radium in its action. It acts in a silent, subtle, unseen way and leavens the whole society.**

**Real suffering bravely borne melts even a heart of stone.**

**Anger and intolerance are the twin enemies of correct understanding.**



**Non-violence is an active force of the highest order.**

**Anger is the enemy of ahimsa, and pride is a monster that swallows it up.**

**Satyagraha is the introduction of truth and gentleness in the national life.**

**God is the shield of the non-violent.**

**Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant of spirit glory in fighting alone.**

**Bravery is not a quality of body, it is of the soul.**

**Gift of life is the greatest of all gifts, a man who gives it in reality, disarms all hostility.**

**If we develop the force of will, we shall find that we do not need the force of arms.**

**To me God is truth and love, God is ethics and morality. God is fearlessness, God is the source of light and life and yet he is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist for in his boundless love, God permits the atheist to live.**

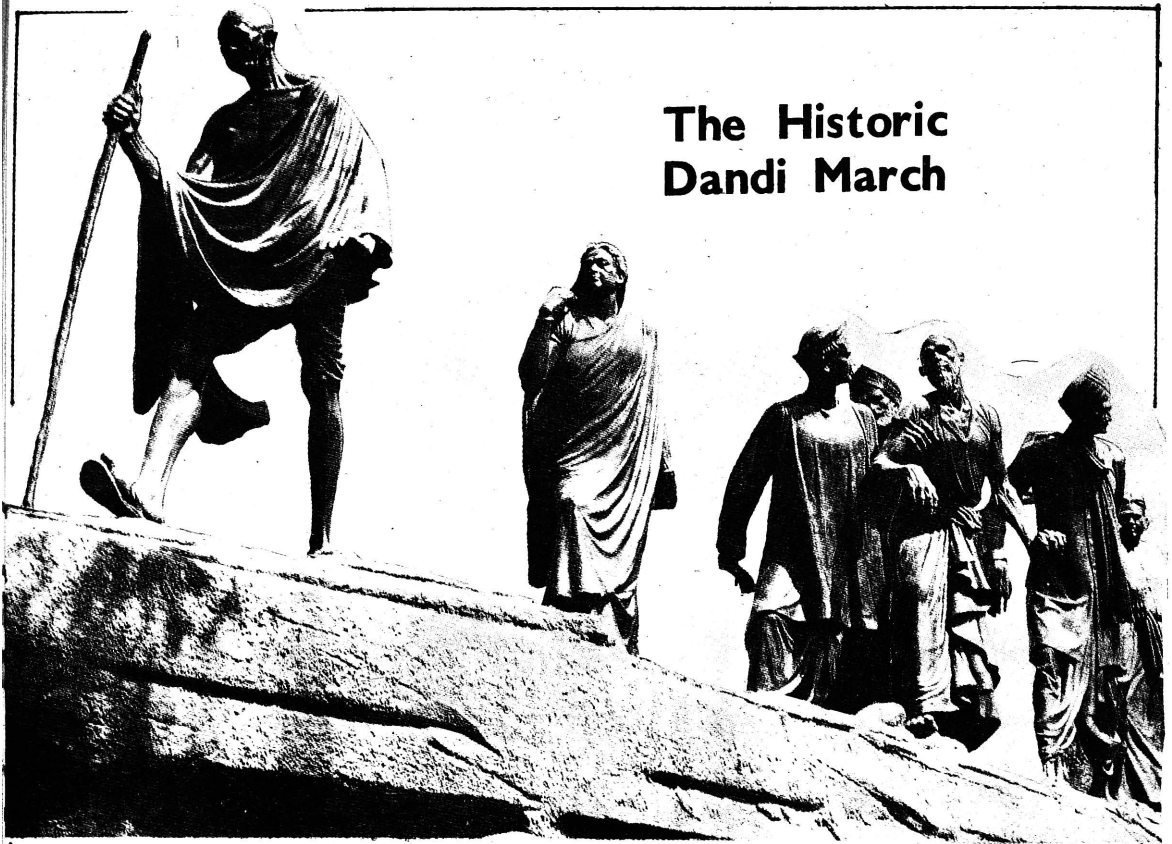
**Whatever you do, be true to yourselves and to the world.**

**Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by all the scriptures of the world.**

**Untruth and violence are twin sisters.**



## The Historic Dandi March



The historic Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, is a significant landmark in the history of India's struggle for freedom. Started to break the tyrannious salt tax by picking up salt on the sea-coast at Dandi in South Gujarat, it kindled a new spirit of sacrifice among the people and with it the mass civil dis-obedience movement spread like wild fire all over the country.

The Great March, which was like Lord Buddha's Mahabhinishkraman, commenced from the Ashram premises on the banks of the river Sabarmati at Ahmedabad at 6.30a.m on March 12, 1930 with seventy-

eight inmates. Mahatma Gandhi though frail but full of energy even at the age of sixty one with his staff in hand, led the satyagrahis who hailed from all the parts of the country—the Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, U.P., Kutch, Sind, Kerala, Rajputana, Andhra, Karnataka, Bombay, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Bengal, Utkal and even from Nepal and Fiji. They represented a cross-section of the people as among them were two Muslims and one Christian besides Hindus including two Harijans.

Before commencing the march, Gandhi had a long communication with the Viceroy on this unjust Salt Act and the civil disobedience to be resumed by him but a just reply was not forthcoming.

As the appointed day for the march was nearing, thousands of people began to throng the premises

and the surrounding open grounds of the Sabarmati Ashram. On the eve of the march, Gandhiji in his memorable speech at the evening prayers expressed his wish that there be no suspension or abandonment of the campaign he was commencing next morning.

"For me this is nothing less than a holy pilgrimage" said Gandhiji about the Dandi March. "Like the historic march of Ramachandra to Lanka the march of Gandhi will be memorable", said Motilal Nehru while P.C. Ray compared it with "the exodus of the Israelites under Moses."

Gandhiji declared not to return to the Ashram till the freedom was won.

A huge crowd followed Gandhiji and his batch of satyagrahis as they commenced their

*Tamil Arasu*



I want world  
sympathy in  
this battle of  
Right against  
Wrong.  
Sardar Vallabhbhai  
5.4.30



The battle against the 'Black Regime' was at its climax when Gandhiji planned to commence the march to Dharasana Salt Works. But at the dead of night, at 00.45 hrs. on May 4, 1930 he was arrested at Karadi, three miles from Dandi. Within an hour he was driven away in a lorry to Yervada Central Prison, after the hymn Vaishnavajan with which he had commenced his march was recited.

march. The people everywhere were overcome with a new wave of enthusiasm. As if a spell was cast by this march, thousands of people gathered on the way to greet the satyagrahis. They decorated the 241-mile route of the march with arches, torans, flags and festoons.

broke the salt law by picking up a lump of salt.

The first salvo of the battle was thus fired and the entire nation rose as a man against what Gandhiji described as 'Goonda Raj'

Gandhiji had nominated Abbas Tyabji and after him Tmt. Sarojini Naidu to lead the Satyagraha if he was arrested.

Miraben, a close associate of Gandhiji said about the arrest that, "At the dead of night, like thieves they came to steal him away for when they sought to lay hand on him, they feared the multitudes, because they took him for a prophet."

The march commenced everyday at 6.30 a.m. after the morning prayers. The Ashram routine was to be strictly observed by all the satyagrahis. Gandhiji used to get up very early at about four in the morning and retire after 9.00 p.m. He with his co-marchers covered ten or more miles everyday. He also addressed huge public meetings, gave interviews, held discussions, replied letters and wrote for his periodical all throughout his journey.

Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru met Gandhiji at Jambusar and also marched a little distance with him. Motilal Nehru made a gift of their ancestral house, Anand Bhavan at Allahabad to the nation thereafter consulting him.

The long trek came to an end on April 5th, the twenty-fourth day of the journey. On April 6th, soon after the prayers Gandhiji took a bath in the sea and at 8.30 a.m. he

#### “ The aftermath of the March

On the morning of April 6, 1930, the salt tax law was defied at Dandi. As Gandhiji put it: "... it was now open to anyone who would take the risk of prosecution under the salt laws to manufacture salt."

The entire nation rose in response. Countless Indians courted arrest. Salt depots were raided. In a single raid at Dharasana, Gujarat, 289 volunteers were mercilessly beaten up.

The British were retaliating by unleashing a wave of terror. The jails filled up: with over 95,000 brave Indians. On April 14, Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested and sentenced to six months of imprisonment. ”





## Dandi March Re-Enacted - Replaying History

The Hon'ble Prime Minister, Thiru. Rajiv Gandhi, on 12th March 1988, flagged off and led a Dandi yatra from the Haijjan ashram at Ahmedabad to commemorate the historic Dandi March undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle. The march, renamed 'Ekta Yatra' started exactly at 6.20 a.m. with thousands of people taking part.

The Prime Minister starting off from the ashram walked about four km. with the 80 yatris, especially trained for the 365-km march. The yatris, like the original marchers of March 12, 1930, were dressed in khadi kurta, pyjama and Gandhi cap with a sling bag on the shoulder and a tricolour scarf tied around the neck. The Prime Minister and his wife were similarly dressed.

The start of the march was preceded by a ceremony during which six survivors of the original Dandi March were felicitated. Mementoes were presented to the six. Thiru. Bhanushanker Dave, Thiru. Ratanji Boricha, Thiru. Lalji Parmar, Thiru. Madhavlal Shah, Thiru. Satish Kalelkar and Thiru. Anand Hingorani. The Prime Minister also joined in the singing of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite bhajans by singer Sudha Malhotra.

Tmt. Madhuri Khare evoked nostalgic memories of the original Dandi March when she sang 'Hari Om., Hari Om. Shur Sangram Karo'. The bhajan was sung by her father, Narayan Shastri Khare, on March 12, 1930 before Mahatma Gandhi set out on his march to Dandi to break the salt law.

One of the six veterans handed over the national flag and a torch

to Thiru Gandhi, which he passed over to two of the trekkers. The large crowd which had started collecting in the ashram compound then stood up and jointly took a pledge to protect the unity and integrity of the nation and strive for the uplift of backward classes and of the nation as a whole.

About 90 MPs including ministers, several freedom fighters and many other people participated in the yatra up to a considerable distance. Ahead of the march advanced the 40-member pilot group called 'Arun Tukdi' comprising youngsters who will look after the requirements of the trekkers.

### DANDI ENACTMENT COMPLETED.

From this tiny historic coastal village called Dandi in South Gujarat, His Excellency, the President, Thiru R. Venkataraman, on April 7th 1988 exhorted the countrymen to rededicate themselves to the path of service, sacrifice, love, compassion, truth and non-violence that Mahatma Gandhi had shown.

He was speaking from the same spot where Gandhiji had addressed the participants of the famous 'Dandi March' and other freedom-fighters 58 years ago.

The President said, "let us again prove to ourselves and to the world that we shall be true to the salt of our forebears who suffered and sacrificed their all so that we may live in freedom and dignity."

The Dandi Salt Satyagraha, he said, imbued the countrymen, with a new confidence, which became an inspiration forever.

The President was addressing the participants of the 'Ekta yatra'—a re-enactment of the Dandi march" led by Gandhiji to defy that salt tax imposed by the British Regime—and a large gathering which came from far and near to the village.

The batch of 79 padyatris were welcomed by the President, amidst raising of national slogans, on their arrival, the 26th day of their 387 km long trek through 43 villages of Central and South Gujarat.

Organised by the State-level committee celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Independence and the birth centenary of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Ekta Yatra was held to demonstrate communal harmony, integrity and solidarity of the nation.

The President said, nearly six decades after the "Dandi March"—the first salvo of the freedom battle—and four decades after the attainment of independence, the tenets of Mahatma Gandhi were relevant even today.

"Gandhiji's Dandi march beckons us today to place duty above self and to see once again in the ordinary men and women of India the potential for extraordinary action".

Later the President, who arrived at the site from Navasari, unveiled a commemoration plaque to mark the 40th anniversary of Independence.

Five pledges: Five pledges inscribed on the plaque are to defend unity and integrity of India, pursue communal harmony, inculcate a sense of discipline in thought and action, serve the weak and down-trodden uncessingly and build a strong, stable and prosperous India.

Prominent among those who attended the function were the Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat, Thiru R.K. Trivedi, the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Thiru Amarsingh Chaudhary and the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Thiru. Shiv Charan Mathur.

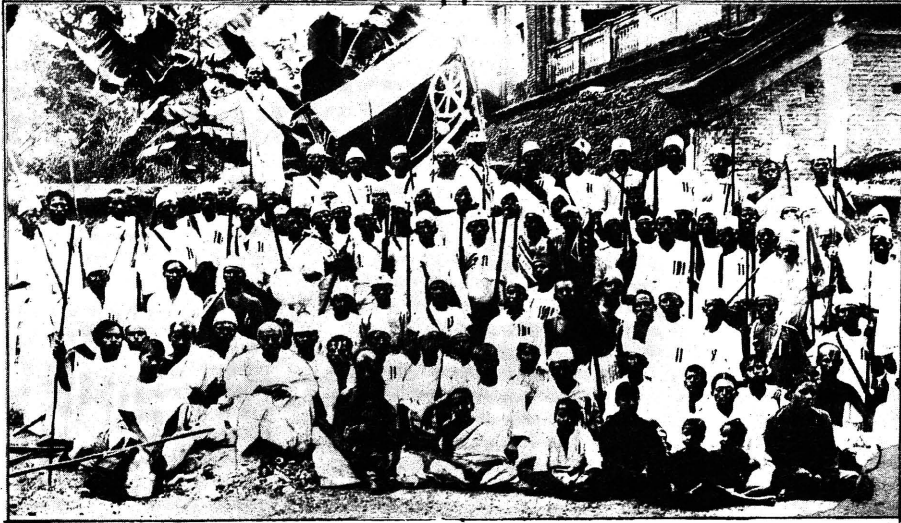
The President clad in spotless white, took the 'Ektajyoti' and the national flag from the two youngest 'padyatris' and handed them over to youths from Tamil Nadu, where a similar march has been planned from April 13th to 28th. The marchers will trek from Tiruchi to Vedaranyam covering 36 villages and a distance of 260 km.

Tamil Arasu



# FREEDOM STRUGGLE

## The March to Vedaranyam



### M. C. Subramaniam

Former Editor "Indian Review"

He who is valiant of heart fleeth  
not from the face of peril  
And he who fleeth from peril is  
craven and base  
Behold, the battle is joined  
Fierce, Fierce is the onslaught.

—Kabir.

Time cannot dull the echoes of the soft but firm tread of the peaceful column of seventy-eight satyagrahis who, under the generalship of Mahatma Gandhi, set out on the 12th of March 1930 from the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad towards Dandi, a sea-coast village some 240 miles away. When the Satyagrahis commenced their march, they looked like a band of pilgrims-simple, meek, solemn; as they marched on they seemed to carry with them an invisible Cross, the message of their march and the mode of their proposed fight reflecting the Christian ethics of conquest through non-violent suffering; and when they

marched to raid the salt depot at Dharasana in the face of raining bullets and savage lathi blows, they showed the same death-defying courage as that of Leonidas and his band of 300 Spartans who fought against the advancing hordes of Persians at the pass of Thermopylae. Every foot-fall of the Mahatma during his march to Dandi produced an earthquake in every layer of Indian consciousness.

The march to Dandi was the last and most explosive of events that built up a climate of nation-wide resistance against the British imperial power. The Indian National Congress meeting at Lahore in December 1929 declared the goal of India as Poorna Swaraj. At the call of the Congress and Gandhiji, the people all over India observed January 26, 1930 as the "Independence Day".

On March 2, Gandhiji sent a letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin—a digni-

fied and powerful indictment of the British rule in India—informing him of his decision to proceed to Dandi with a band of followers to break the Salt Laws, "the most iniquitous" of all laws. The Viceroy's polite but unhelpful reply helped only to aggravate the prevailing tension in the country.

Gandhiji, addressing a mammoth meeting on the sands of Sabarmati, said: "I have faith in the righteousness of our cause and the purity of our weapons. And where the means are clean, there is God undoubtedly present with his blessings, and where these three combine, there defeat is an impossibility".





On March 12 at 6.30 A.M. Gandhiji commenced his march to Dandi with seventy-eight followers. But actually, entire India followed him and the world watched him in admiration. "Today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek", Jawaharlal Nehru observed, "Staff in hand he goes along the dusty roads of Gujarat, clear-eyed and firm of step, with his faithful band trudging along behind him. Many a journey he had undertaken in the past, many a weary road traversed. But longer than any that have gone before is this last journey of his and many are the obstacles in his way. But the fire of a great resolve is in him and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen; and love of truth that scorches and love of freedom that inspires. None that passes him can escape the spell, and men of common clay feel the spark of life. It is a long journey, for the goal is independence of India and the ending of the exploitation of her millions". An epic was unfolding itself before the people. The speeches he delivered every day of his march, the discipline followed by the Satyagrahis, the reverence and love that people showed him all along the route, the details of the preparation made by the leaders all over the land to start the struggle the moment the Mahatma gave the signal—all these electrified the atmosphere in the country.

Gandhiji carefully watched every step of his, even as he watched every step of every satyagrahi to prevent even a slight deviation from the ashram regimen. He came down on the people and the Satyagrahis—the former for offering lavish hospitality and the latter for showing an inclination to accept it—as severely

as he condemned the iniquitous extravagance of the British rulers.

The 241 mile march came to an end on April 5. The sixth of April marked the commencement of the National Week. On that day Gandhiji bathed in the sea and then at 8.30 A.M. picked up a lump of natural salt. "Now that the technical or ceremonial breach of the Salt Laws has been committed," he said, "it is now open to anyone who would take the risk of prosecution under the Salt Law to manufacture salt wherever he wishes and wherever it is convenient".

The nation responded with an open and widespread defiance of Salt Laws. The police unleashed savage violence on the Satyagrahis. They used brute force to snatch the salt from the hands of the breakers of the law. In a message to the people Gandhiji said: "At present India's self-respect, in fact, her all, is, symbolised as it were, in a handful of salt in the Satyagrahi's hand. Our path has already been chalked out for us. Let every village manufacture or fetch contraband salt; sisters should picket liquor shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops".

The movement gained in strength in the cities, towns and villages. Disobedience of Salt Laws, picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops and several other forms of active resistance to the ruling power became daily features. Government repression was severe, and brutal.

In the heart of Tamil Nadu, Rajaji set about organising the movement with his characteristic thoroughness. He planned a march from Tiruchi to Vedaranyam, one of the well-known salt-manufacturing centres. He selected a hundred volunteers after careful screening. Enthusiasm was not the only factor that deter-

“For the average farmer, the annual salt tax was equivalent to three day's income. In a grain of salt Gandhi found the perfect symbol of freedom. To oppose the salt-law would be to assert a simple, elementary human right.”

mined the selection. The health and habits of the volunteers mattered; also the toughness of their spirit. The hundred included teenagers like G. K. Sundaram, journalists like A.N.Sivaraman and non-co-operation veterans like K. Santhanam. He chartered out the route of the march, worked out the logistics, determined the composition of the advance party to select camp sites, contact the villagers and make whatever arrangements possible. He also drew up a schedule of the campaign at Vedaranyam and nominated Sri Vedaratnam Pillai as the Sardar of the campaign.

The challenge that faced Rajaji was unlike any that faced any general at any time in history. No one knew the character and dimensions of this war better than he. He was fully aware of the strength of the enemy and the means and methods by which he would try to defeat him. He also knew the strength of his own people. To keep his followers—he trusted them fully and they lived up to his trust—on the steep and narrow path of truth and non-violence. To infuse courage into the people and to prevent even a section of them turning reckless, to raise the emotional temperature of the masses and maintain it at a particular level where it would, without exhausting itself into shouting, prod them to offer disciplined help and co-operation, to foil the attempts of the Governments to provoke situations that would give them valid excuses for tarnishing the movement and arresting its participants and supporters—these required the calibre of the traditional army general a seasoned politician and a man of great wisdom and high moral character. Rajaji showed that he was correctly chiselled for the role.

The authorities were alarmed by preparations that were being made for the Satyagraha. Mr. Thorne, the Collector of Tanjore passed an order that it was a penal offence to shelter, feed or offer any other help to the marching Satyagrahis. Rajaji's reaction was characteristic. He said he knew his people and of their tradition of hospitality. He was sure they would help them. Only,

he was afraid that the Satyagrahis ran the risk of being overfed and over-cared for! He had only to see that they were not deflected from the pursuit of their goal by the overwhelming hospitality of the Tamil people.

When the Satyagrahis started on their march on the 13th of April, the last day of the National Week, a pall of terror descended on Tanjore. Policemen, spies and agents provocateur were all over the district filling the atmosphere with dark threats that those who helped the civil resisters in any manner would face imprisonment, confiscation of property and dismissal from Government service. The officials made a desperate bid to prevent the Satyagrahis from reaching their destination. The Satyagrahis were marching, carefully watching every one of their steps. They were resolved to reach their destination.

In this extraordinary game, each party tried to outwit the other. One was armed with all the resources of the state and was intent on suppressing by all possible means the movement that was challenging its authority; the other was unarmed but determined to resist the might of the ruling power by directly disobeying its unjust laws and promoting their disobedience by the people through peaceful, non-violent, concerted action.

As the Satyagrahis marched on, it became evident that the entire Cauvery basin bowed in respect to Rajaji. It looked as though the people had a spontaneous understanding of the needs of the situation and expressed their solidarity and support for the Satyagraha army in a hundred ways. Some of them helped the Satyagraha marchers without attracting the mischief of Mr. Thorne's orders. Some others openly defied the Government orders and willingly paid the penalty.

The first open defiance of Mr. Thorne's orders was made by Mr. Pantulu Iyer at Kumbakonam. Pantulu Iyer arranged a royal feast for the Satyagrahis and for this he was promptly put in prison. Pantulu Iyer's case stimulated the thinking of the people and produced novel ideas

of entertaining the civil resisters. Wayside trees, besides protecting the Satyagrahis from the scorching summer heat, bent low to offer them the food packets that had been tied to the branches. In some place where the Satyagrahis had camped on the Cauvery river bed they found indicators showing where huge containers carrying all the items of a good feast lay buried. The roads were watered in many places. There were welcome arches in some places and green leaf festoons everywhere. In places where roads were blocked by huge trees uprooted by the agents of the Government for the purpose of obstructing the Satyagrahis, the villagers laid temporary diversion roads overnight.

People lined the routes of the marching army. The palm groves and mango gardens echoed to the cries of "Jai". Everywhere the meetings addressed by Rajaji and others drew huge crowds. Many local leaders dared the Governments and presided over some of the meetings. Kodiyalam Rangaswamy Iyengar, an old-time nationalist and a highly respected gentleman, presided over one such meeting. Rajaji played cool most of the time in order to prevent the enthusiasm of the people from breaching the bounds of law and order and thus obliging the Government. At Tiruthurai-poondi, Rajaji managed an explosive situation with great tact. The police had made all arrangements to disturb the meeting to be addressed by Rajaji under the Chairmanship of Sri Ramachandra Naidu, a very influential and very popular mirasdar of the district, arrest Sri Naidu and provoke a riot situation. Rajaji was given advance information about police plans. Immediately the meeting began, Rajaji appealed to the people not to lose their poise when the agents provocateur disturbed the meeting and arrested Sri Naidu. He warned them against playing into the hands of the Government and promised to secure the release of Sri Naidu on bail if and when he was arrested. Things happened according to the police plan upto the point of disturbing the meeting and arresting Sri Naidu. People obeyed Rajaji implicitly and refused to be provoked. They



sat through the meeting even after Sri Naidu was arrested. As promised, Rajaji got him released on bail.

Rajaji was then 52 and not in the best of health. But he was always at the head of the moving column of volunteers showing no trace of weariness. It took three weeks for the Satyagrahis to reach Vedaranyam which accorded them a welcome given only to heroes. Until Rajaji reached Vedaranyam he gave the Government no chance to arrest him or any of his volunteers even on any technical offence. He preached sedition without attracting the provisions of the law of sedition.

On the appointed day Rajaji was at a spot in the sea shore which was in the periphery of the stretch heavily guarded by the police and at a time when the first bird warbled to announce the approaching dawn, the police noticed him only after he had bathed in the sea and solemnly flouted the salt law by picking up salt from the shore. Rajaji was arrested, tried summarily and sentenced to undergo imprisonment for six months.

Stories of how volunteers guarded the salt they had gathered in the face of police brutality are endless. One volunteer refused to give the salt he had picked up even when his fingers were beaten to pulp by the police lathi. When the attempts of the police failed to break up a ring of volunteers guarding pots of "illicit" salt and when the police started beating them mercilessly with the birch, Srimath Ruckmani Lakshmi pathy kept running round the ring to stand behind the volunteers to receive on her own back the birch that was descending on them. The policemen are reported to have gone away tired and ashamed.





# What were the National leaders doing during the Salt Satyagraha?

Here, in this indepth article, you'll understand the role of national leaders such as Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Abul Kalam Azad, Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru and Pandit Vallabh Pant in the Salt Satyagraha of the 1930. A revelation of how Mahatma's team enthused wide support for the satyagraha against the Salt Law.

## Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru The Motivator



laws were to be broken. We were bewildered and could not quite fit in a national struggle with common salt. Another surprising development was Gandhiji's announcement of his 'Eleven Points'. What was the point of making a test of some political and social reforms—good in themselves, no doubt when we were taking in terms of independence? Did Gandhiji mean the same thing when he used this term as we did, or did we speak a different language? We had no time to argue, for events were on the move. They were moving politically before our eyes from day to day in India.

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 Jallianwallah Bagh. On that day Gandhiji began the break of the salt laws at Dandi beach, and three or four days later permissions was given to all Congress Organisations 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 every town and village. Salt manufacture as the topic of the day, and many curious expedients were adopted to produce salt. We knew precious little about it,

but we read it on dailies 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 later 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 doing 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 marvelled at the amazing knack of the man to impress the multitudes and make it act in an organized way.

Nehru was arrested on April 14th.

## Abul Kalam Azad The Fire Brand

During March 1930, the Congress launched its campaign for full freedom and Mahatma Gandhi started his Dandi March. He was arrested on May 5th, 1930, for breaking the salt law. The whole country was galvanized into action. Maulana

The great question that hung in the air now was how? What form of civil disobedience should we take up that would be effective, suited to the circumstances and popular with the masses? And then the Mahatma gave the hint.

Salt suddenly became a mysterious word, a word of power. The salt tax was to be attacked, the salt



Azad urged the Muslims to join the satyagraha and at his call thousands of Muslims for Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province courted arrest. The Congress instituted a system of Dictators for the movement. As soon as a dictator was arrested, he nominated another person as a dictator. Maulana Azad succeeded Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as the Dictator within 11 days, he too was arrested and Dr. Ansari took over as Dictator. Azad was sentenced to six months imprisonment for delivering an objectionable speech in Meerut. He was kept in the Meerut jail and the country observed a hartal on his arrest.

## Sarojini Naidu The Live Wire



As Mahatma picked the salt up on March 12th 1930 Sarojini Naidu cried: "Hail Deliverer" and thousands waded into the water to fill their vessels. Gandhiji was arrested. Sarojini visited him and was asked to become the leader after Abbas Tyabji was arrested. She went to the Dharsana Salt works and lead a huge army. At Dharsana she and her followers were stopped and as they sat on the road in the blazing sun all the more thirsty because the police bailed them with water carts but would not allow them to drink.

Mr. Webb Miller gives a graphic account of this momentous struggle in his book, *'I found no peace.'* His admiration was unlimited. Sarojini

Naidu, the famous Indian poetess is leading a non-violent demonstration against the big salt pans near Dharsana.

Madame Naidu called for prayers 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."

Her words were greeted with wild cheers.

Mr. Miller says: 'I went to see Madame. Naidu who was directing the sub leaders 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 laughingly 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 to the barbed wire stockade where she was interned. . . . Later she was sentenced to prison. Motilal Gandhi was also arrested. 'Quick, quick; pack up your tooth brushes and come away to the van' was Naidu's jesting remark.

## Rajendra Prasad

There was a wave of enthusiasm and preparation for Satyagraha in Bihar as in other parts of the country. Salt Satyagraha was soon launched in different parts of Bihar, the districts of Champaran and Saran being the first in the field. Rajendra Prasad moved from place to place propagating the message of Satyagraha, for which he issued suitable instructions.

His views on how the policemen were to be treated were:—"I hear that in the areas where Satyagraha operations are going on, the members of the police are not getting foodstuffs or quarters for residence. I want to make it known to the



public that we have no enmity with the men in the Police service, although we are making all possible efforts to remove the government of which they consider themselves the servants. Therefore, if a policeman in uniform demands food or shelter authoritatively as a member of the government, he should be on no account be provided with it. But in case he claims it as a matter of courtesy and obtains permission from the Satyagraha camp officer on the local Sardar, he should be supplied with all the necessary articles so that he may not be put to any trouble."

Rajendra Prasad did not himself manufacture salt but he led the movement in Bihar by touring the districts, supervising the activity, addressing public meetings and giving encouragement to the satyagrahis. In all these areas people vied with one another in manufacturing salt. Rajendra Prasad auctioned the salt manufactured by the Satyagrahis wherever he went and utilised the amount to meet their expenses.

From April 16th to 21st, 1930, many worthy sons of Bihar carried on salt Satyagraha at Patna with heroic determination and courage in the face of ruthless violence. Selecting Nakhas Pond, situated about three kilometres east of Mangles Tank in Patna city, as the place for violating salt laws, the satyagrahis marched from Patna Congress office at 9 A.M. on April 16th Undeterred in the least by police atrocities, the processionists squatted on the ground at the junction of the main road leading to the Bihar college of Engineering.





Considering the unique position of Rajendra Prasad as the most revered leader of Bihar, the government had proceeded cautiously in arresting him. By the middle of June the government's view was that "proceedings may be taken against him and he may be arrested without reference to government if there is clear case against him. . . ." Rajendra Prasad was on a three day tour programme in Champran district. When he was proceeding to Gankha he was arrested on the way on July 5.

### Sardar Patel



Sardar Patel was amazed at the Eleven Points list of Gandhi when Gandhi showed him the letter before sending it to the Viceroy. He bluntly told him that not one of the eleven points would be conceded. 'Do you know, Bapu,' he surmised, 'you are asking the Viceroy to commit harakiri and sign the death warrant of the 'British Raj?' 'And do you



seriously think he has the power, even if he wanted, to concede your demands?" The Mahatma smiled enigmatically and replied: "Well, let us see. At least the Government will not have the cause to say that I did not put my cards on the table. It is for them to play fair or foul. But why prejudice their intentions?"

Of course the Viceroy turned down the demands and the civil disobedience movement was launched. Vallabhbhai suggested that non-payment of land revenue should be made the main issue, but Gandhiji thought that the country was not ready for it as it would entail too much hardship on the poverty-stricken peasant; instead he decided to make salt the fighting issue.

Patel knew that Gandhi's letter had no chance of receiving even a second look, and in anticipation of the impending struggle he began making preparations, as he was anxious to avoid repetition of the 1922 campaign which failed, among other reasons, for lack of proper preparation. In that year, as soon as Gandhi was arrested the movement collapsed and Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, could say that 'not a dog barked in the whole of India when the leader was arrested, and the British Caravan could move forward peacefully'. Patel wanted to prove this time that even if Gandhi and other leaders were arrested the movement would go on and the goals would overflow with satyagraha prisoners. His attitude to the coming struggle becomes clear in the following extract from a speech he delivered at Broach at the time. He said:

"What is there left now for Gandhiji to tell us, after having taught us so much over the years? The world will ask you what you have learnt and done. Gandhiji has done whatever is possible, and I am sure will continue to play his part. After him his colleagues will be arrested and then will come in time, the time for your test. I ask all of you to have faith in God, and to realize that he who is born is destined to die. No one can escape death. Then why not die the death of the

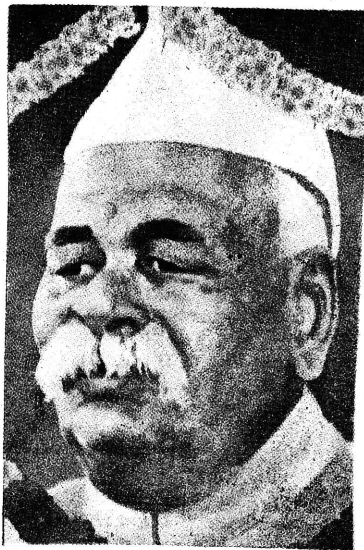
brave? Is it not better to look for the day when history will record that you stood firm when men were being killed? Let there be innumerable arrests and imprisonments, so that the world may find out for itself whether the dog is capable of barking or not!"

Vallabhbhai Patel did not accompany Gandhiji on this historic march; he left Ahmedabad a week earlier to prepare the way and make suitable arrangements for lodging and and boarding the marchers. He would stop at way side villages to explain to the people the significance of the new movement and deliver his Master's message that the 'British rule had brought moral, material, and spiritual ruination of the country and must be destroyed at any cost! He spoke in his usual homely style with the right touch of peasant core. He would tell the simple peasants. 'As you know, Rama's army consisted of monkeys in the forest; but it defeated the mighty Ravana. What provided Rama and his monkey army their strength? It was the moral conviction that theirs was a righteous cause. I ask you if here could be any cause more sacred and righteous than the freedom of India, our common motherland?' And he would end his short speeches by saying 'I will say no more-the choice is yours to prove whether you are men.' The villagers responded warmly to his exquisite mixture of mythology and modern political ideas, and made great preparations to welcome Gandhiji.

CID men following Patel reported the tremendous effect, his speeches were having on people and the rapid spread of ideas of civil disobedience and freedom. The Government lost no time in acting on these reports and arrested Patel on March 7th at the village of Ras near Borsad.

### Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant

The salt stir spread throughout the country Govindh Ballabh Pant addressed a huge meeting at Haldwani. He told his audience to adhere the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi. He criticized the government and



offered himself for arrest. Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested on 13th April and Gandhiji on May 5th.

Pant addressed the processionists at the Ram Lila grounds. The entire responsibility of leading the movement in Kumaon lay on Pant. He established a 'satyagraha ashram' at Krishnapur in Nainital. Pant himself led a batch of five satyagrahis on May 2, 1930. A big crowd gave a rousing oration to Pant. He was arrested, the Volunteers were arrested but all of them were let out in the jungle of Lalkuan. They came to Nainital the same day. It became a daily routine and in spite of his bad health Pant continued to inspire and guide the movement. There was a complete bandh in Nainital on May 7, as soon as the news of Mahatma Gandhi's arrest reached there. Pant addressed a huge meeting and foreign cloth was set to fire. A bonfire of foreign cloth was an every-day treat in those days.

On May 25th, 1930 Pant decided to make salt. He was arrested the following day and was sentenced to six months vigorous imprisonment for defying the salt law. He was sent to Bareilly. Before his arrest Pant gave explicit instructions to the volunteers to keep the candle of non-violent resistance burning,

'enlistment of volunteers should be carried on incessantly....salt should be manufactured at Nainital and other places. Volunteers should not yield salt made by them if attempt is made to snatch it.....they must remain non-violent under greatest provocation.

A batch of five volunteers with national flags will start at 6 A.M. from the satyagraha camp singing national songs such as 'Bande Mataram' and 'Nanda Uncha Rake Hamara' and raising non-violent shouts of 'Bande Mataram' Mahatma Gandhiji Ki Jai! and "Swatantra Bharat Ki Jai!

### Subhas Chandra Bose



On 23rd January 1930 Subhas Chandra Bose had been sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment for the procession he had led in Calcutta in August 1929 in protest against government repression of revolutionaries and political prisoners.

As Bose watched from prison, Gandhi, at last, commenced the movement Bose had long argued and pleaded for. It was a national movement launched by Gandhi and undoubtedly the most spectacular.

Yet, like almost everybody else, Bose was confused by the Mahatma's first moves. Gandhi first wrote to the Viceroy promising not to start his civil disobedience campaign if he



carried out certain social reforms such as total prohibition and the abolition of the tax on the making of salt. There was no mention of dominion status, let alone independence, in all this. How, Bose wondered, could social reform achieve that. But Gandhi had shrewdly seized on a subject that he knew could bridge the elitist preoccupation with independence and the poor masses' struggle to survive. For centuries Indians had boiled sea water to make salt. Now the alien British Government had taxed it and restricted manufacture to salt works. This for the poor was the real meaning of alien's rule. As Irwin contemptuously rejected Gandhi's letter, Gandhi set out on his historic march to Dandi. On 6th April 1930 Gandhi picked up salt from the beach near Dandi, and nationalist Indians were swept up into the civil disobedience movement.

“

On bended knee, 'I asked for bread', said Gandhiji. 'I received a stone instead'. ”

“

Let the fist be broken, but let there be no surrender of salt", Gandhiji wrote. "I want world sympathy in this battle of right against might. ”





# Rs. 154 Crores for Poverty Alleviation in 1988

A massive poverty alleviation programme has been taken up by the State Government under which schemes costing Rs. 154 crores will be implemented during the current year. The schemes include construction of 52,000 houses, 1,200 Community centres, 235 school buildings and 2,900 other works, besides raising social forestry over an extent of 19,000 hectares.

This was announced by His Excellency the Governor, Dr. P.C. Alexander, at the end of a two-day conference of Collectors and Superintendents of Police on 9th April 1988 in Madras.

Provision of drinking water, streamlining of public distribution system, implementation of economic regeneration programmes and helping industries to overcome their sickness were among the high-priority areas which came up for an in-depth discussion at the conference.

His Excellency, the Governor said he had asked the Collectors to go ahead with the poverty allevia-

tion programme without waiting for release of funds from the Centre. The works would be started from now on in anticipation of Central funds so that there was no delay in the implementation of the programmes and their impact could be felt even by the middle of the year.

Four thousand additional borewells will be sunk before July end to augment water supply in rural areas. The Collectors had been fixed a target to sink 685 borewells by April 30th, another 915 by the end of May, 1,215 by June and 1,185 by July 31st.

The target dates had been fixed in consultation with the officers concerned and the programme would involve Rs. 10 crores. The Governor was confident that the target would be achieved by July as the programme was based on a realistic assessment.

With regard to the public distribution system, the Governor said it had been decided to open part-time fair price shops

wherever they were considered absolutely necessary. The Collectors, had been asked to send proposals on where such part-time fair price shops should be located.

Special steps would be taken to ensure additional supply of kerosene in villages. It had been decided to strengthen co-operative societies by making available to them adequate funds, as many of the societies were not able to get for some reason or other, the funds which were due to them. Yet another decision taken was to permit the noon meal centres to buy vegetables in the open market on a daily-basis. The Governor said this did not mean that the noon meal centres had been banned from buying the vegetables from producers' co-operatives. They had been given the freedom to buy from the open market in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the programme.

The Governor said Rs. 2 crores would be granted to repair the kitchen sheds of the noon meal centres.

## Who lives if India Dies? Who dies if India Lives?

And today the pilgrim marches onwards on his long trek. Staff in hand, he goes along the dusty roads of Gujarat, clear eyed and firm of step, with his faithful band trudging along behind him. Many a journey has he undertaken in the past, many a weary road traversed. But longer than any that have gone before is this last journey of his, and many are the obstacles in his way. But the

fire of the great resolve is in him, and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen. And love of truth that scorches, and love of freedom that inspires. And none that passes him can escape the spell, and men of common clay feel the spark of life. It is a long journey, for the goal is the independence of India and the ending of the exploitation of her millions.

—Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru  
*In Young India*  
(3rd April, 1930)





**K. Kamaraj**

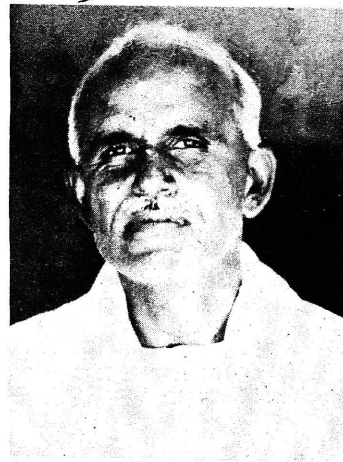
**The five heroes  
of the 1930  
Salt March to  
Vedaranyam  
who later became  
Chief Ministers**



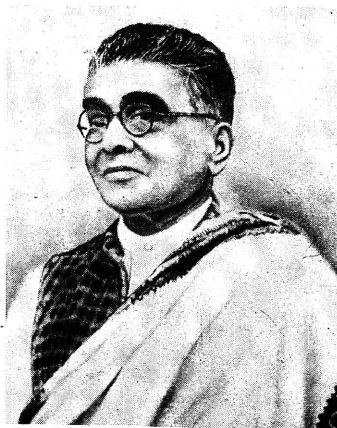
**Rajaji**



**P.S.Kumaraswamy Raja**



**Omandur  
Ramaswamy Reddiyar**



**T. Prakasam**



# Gandhiji's letter to Irwin

Dear Friend,

Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.

My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.....

And why do I regard the British rule as a curse ?

It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinous expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford. It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture. And by the policy of cruel disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually.....

I fear.....there never has been any intention of granting..... Dominion Status to India in the immediate future.....

It seems as clear as daylight that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British policy that might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India.... If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation India must be bled with an ever increasing speed.....

Let me put before you some of the salient points.

The terrific pressure of land revenue, which furnishes a large part of the total, must undergo considerable modification in an Independent India..... the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the peasant's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him, if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man..... The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals.

The iniquities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over 21,000 rupees (about £ 1750) per month, besides many other indirect additions.....

You are getting over 700 rupees a day against India's average income of less than two annas (two pence) perday. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income. On bended knee, I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive home a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole adminis-

tration..... Nothing but organized non-violence can check the organized violence of the British government.....

This non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha (Sabarmati) Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement.....

My ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own.....

If the (Indian) people join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts. The plan through Civil Disobedience will be to combat such evils as I have sampled out..... I respectfully invite you to pave the way for the immediate removal of those evils, and thus open a way for a real conference between equals..... But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and if my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the eleventh day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the Salt Laws..... It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me.....

If you care to discuss matters, with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publications of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram..... This letter is not in any way intended as a threat but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a civil resister. Therefore I am having it specially delivered by a young English friend who believes in the Indian cause.....

I remain,

Your sincere friend,  
M.K. GANDHI.

Tamil Arasu



# Saga of Salt : Tamil Nadu Salt Corporation's Role

**Thiru D. Sridharan, T.A.S.**

*Chairman—Managing Director ,  
Tamil Nadu Salt Corporation Ltd.,*

On March 12, 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi picked up salt as part of Dandi March, the quantity was only a handful but the event proved to be one of the most significant in the saga of India's freedom struggle. Close on the heels of Dandi March on March 12, 1930 was enacted the Salt March in Tamil Nadu in Vedaranyam under the leadership of Rajaji. It is a matter of satisfaction and pride to us in the Tamil Nadu Salt Corporation that one of our Salt Works is named after a veteran freedom fighter—Sardar Vedarathnam Salt Project—is located at Thambikottai in Thanjavur District 50 km. from Vedaranyam.

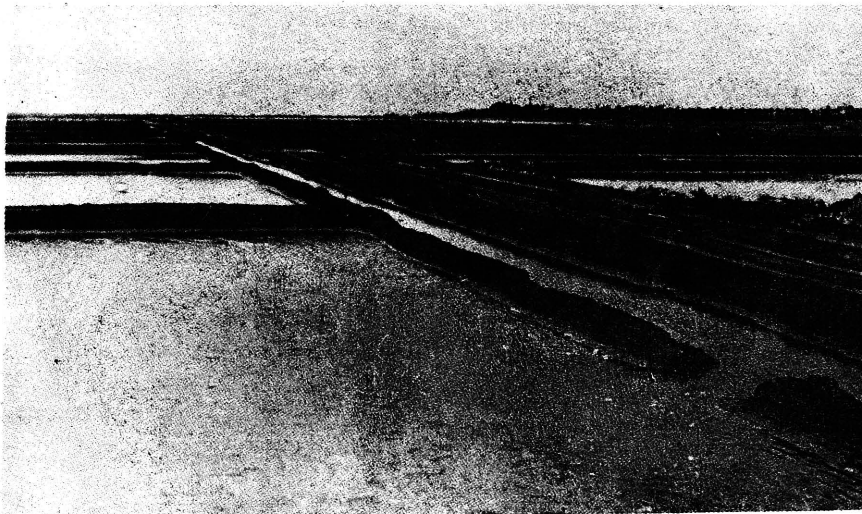
As part of the strategy to develop the backward areas in the State and to generate additional employment, the State Government formed the Tamil Nadu Salt Corporation (TNSC) in July 1974 to produce salt. The first project of TNSC was established in the most backward area of Ramanathapuram District in the remote and interior area of Valinokkam (Mariyur Valinokkam Salt Project) (MVSC)— 45 km from Ramanathapuram town - totally bereft of industries, agricultural operations and trading activities. The second project was taken up at Thambikottai (Sardar Vedarathnam Salt Project) (SVSP) in East Thanjavur District in June 1980.

“ One of our Salt Works located at Thambikottai in Thanjavur District, 50 Kms off Vedaranyam, has been named after Sardar Vedarathnam, the main organizer of the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagrah: ”



**Production / Productivity :** A decade of working of TNSC had seen considerable increase in output as a result of which production has increased from a level of 700 tonnes of over 60,000 tonnes i.e. by nearly 90 times. Even more important, productivity has increased from level of 11—20 tonnes/per hectre from the first two years 1977-78, to a level of 136/tonnes/hectre in 1986.

In its pure state as many as 62 major industries are served by common salt. The versatility of this mineral is evident from the fact that it is perhaps the only item which, according to the Salt Institute of the US, has more than 14,000 uses the world over. It is no wonder, then, that salt is reckoned as one of the five important raw materials, the others being oil, limestone, coal and sulphur. And, along with sulphuric acid and steel, the production and consumption of salt is taken as an



Tamil Arasu





important index of a nation's advancement and prosperity. It has been alluded to in our ancient texts, in the Bible etc.

**Quality :** Considerable emphasis has been placed by the Corporation in maximizing its production of high quality industrial grade salt, whose purity (Nacl) is in the range of 98.5%—99.5% much higher than the Common Salt. Quality emphasis had borne considerable fruit as the Corporation has received a bonus of Rs. 84,600 on a quantity of 2247 tonnes supplied to a major chemical producer in Andhra Pradesh, working out to about Rs. 37/ per ton. This bonus represents over 40% of the basic price.

**By-Products :** The Corporation has produced for the first time

in its 12 year history Gypsum of over 4,000 tonnes and supplied it to Tamil Nadu Cements Corporation. Gypsum is a valuable raw material to Cement Industry which suffers from a acute scarcity of Gypsum.

**Employment Generation :** The employment potential in the projects is estimated at 1,500 direct labour besides indirect employment to thrice that number, when the Projects are fully developed. Presently the projects provide regular employment to about 300 people and seasonal employment to an equal number.

**New Projects :** The Corporation is implementing two pioneering Projects both of which constitute first of their kind the Country over. The first is the manufacture of about 18,000 tonnes of 36% Be Bittern for supply to the strategic Magnesium Metal Project coming up in the vicinity of Valinokkam Salt Works. It may be added that currently the Bittern available with almost all the salt producers at a strength of 29% Be is discarded as a waste and thus the Corporation's efforts would really mean converting waste into wealth and creating a valuable inter-

mediate product for the Magnesium Metal making. The second Project undertaken by the Corporation is the production of Iron Fortified Salt and is in an advanced stage of commissioning. This Project, described by UNICEF as "a novel approach", is implemented with the collaboration of the Government of India's Food and Nutrition Board and UNICEF. It would have an installed capacity of 15,000 tonnes and would be highly effective in combating the endemic anaemia particularly among the weaker sections of the Society as also women and children. With the supply of Iron Fortified Salt through the Nutritious Noon Meal Programme and the Social Welfare Department's schemes to the expectant mothers, extensive coverage of the population affected by anaemia is a distinct possibility and would come as an important tool in the hands of Public Health Managers. The Government has given priority to tackle the many functional repercussions of anaemia and has noted the observations of UNICEF that "the extent, severity and consequences of anaemia make it an important public health problem requiring urgent solution."

The Poverty Alleviation Programme for Tamilnadu will cost Rs. 154 crores and will include construction of 52,000 houses, 1,200 community centres, 235 school buildings and 2,900 other works besides raising social forestry over an area of 19,000 hectares, during the current year. His Excellency the Governor of TamilNadu announced this on 9th April 1988 while summing up the deliberations of the two-day conference of Collectors and Superintendents of Police at Madras.

“There is no honour that this country can win, no power that this country can hold, no glory that this country can attain unless it honours its poorest citizens, unless it builds the power of its citizen, unless it makes the glory of its poorest citizen the proof of the glory of India.”

Rajiv Gandhi



# Check your knowledge



1. What did Gandhi say at Dandi before he broke the salt law?
2. Who carried Gandhi's letter to Lord Irwin 'on salt laws'?
3. How many volunteers accompanied Gandhiji initially at the beginning of the Salt Satyagraha?
4. What was Gandhiji's age when he undertook the Salt march?
5. Who cried 'Hail Deliverer' as Gandhi broke the Salt Law?
6. When and where was Gandhi arrested as the aftermath of salt satyagraha?
7. Who compared the Salt March to 'Napoleon's march to Paris on his return from Elba'?
8. Who was the famous correspondent of United Press who witnessed the Salt March?
9. Who composed the song 'Kathiyinri Rathaminri' (Sars sword sans blood) that was sung by Rajaji and his marchers during the Vedaranyam salt march?
10. What was the sentence on Rajaji for breaking the salt law?

## (Answers)

1. "Watch, I am about to give a signal to the nation."
2. Reginald Reynolds, a British Quaker.
3. 78.
4. 61 years.
5. Sarojini Naidu.
6. May 4th 1930; at Karadi, a village near Dandi.
7. Subhas Chandra Bose.
8. Webb Miller from USA
9. Nammakkal Kavingnar Ramalingam Pillai.
10. Six month rigorous imprisonment plus a Rs. 200 fine or another three months.

### ROUTINE AT GANDHI'S DANDI MARCH

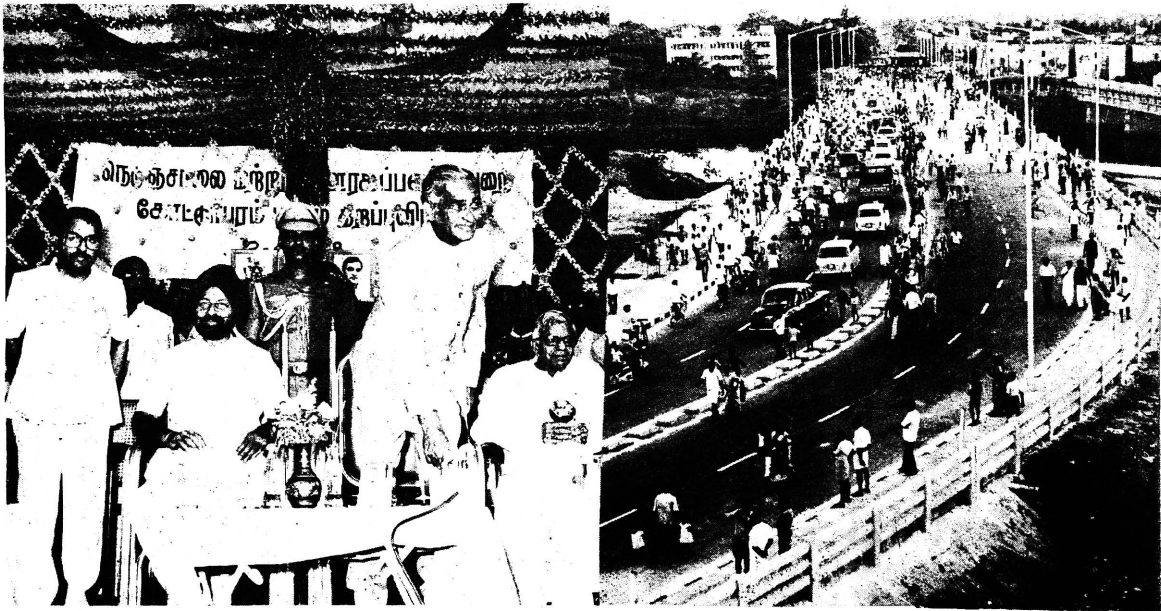
“ They marched on, at the rate of twelve miles a day. The marchers stepped in village after village to explain where they were going and why, and the villagers showered flower petals on their path. The Ashram routine was maintained during the March. Prayers had to be said twice a day, everybody had to spin his quota of yarn and keep a diary. Gandhiji attended to his huge correspondence and played with the children. ”

### REACTION TO GANDHI'S ARREST WAS WORLD WIDE

“ In Panama and in Sumatra, Indian traders observed a day of mourning. In Germany, a movement was started to stop sending goods to India in protest. From America, a hundred and twenty telegrams were sent by influential clergymen asking British Prime Minister to release Gandhi. In Bombay two hundred thousand people marched through the streets. ”



# Kotturpuram Bridge Opened



Declaring open the Kotturpuram Bridge across the Adyar river on 2-4-88, His Excellency Dr. Alexander, the Governor, said he himself had an unpleasant experience of travelling on this road and had directed the Highways Department to expedite work on it within two months. He said encroachments on this road would be removed and the garbage cleared so as to make it good for traffic.

Pointing out that traffic on the city roads was threatening the lives of citizens, the Governor said that by April 15, there would be more orderly traffic. He had given neces-

sary instructions to the Adviser Dr. S. S. Sidhu in this regard.

Dr. Alexander said Madras had great assets like the Marina beach and it would be his endeavour to bring back the original beauty to this city. He sought the cooperation of the people in his efforts to make the city greener and beautiful.

The Governor said steps like "clean city drive" taken by him after assuming office were all elementary things which any good administration should do. The most important task ahead of him was to create the conditions necessary for rapid industrialisation and economic development of the State.

Dr. S. S. Sidhu, Adviser to the Governor, who presided over

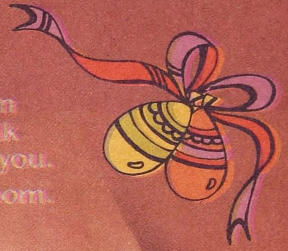
the function said that the World Bank had agreed in principle to assist a Rs. 700 crore project for development of roads, bridges and transport system in the cities of Madras, Madurai, Coimbatore, Tiruchi and Salem. He said the Highways Department should avoid delays in executing these projects.

Pointing out that the MRTS project needed to be expedited, Dr. Sidhu said the Governor had taken up with the Centre the need for larger allocation of funds for it. Referring to the delay in the construction of a subway near St. Thomas Mount railway station, he said it was the desire of the Government to push through that scheme quickly.

Tamil Arasu

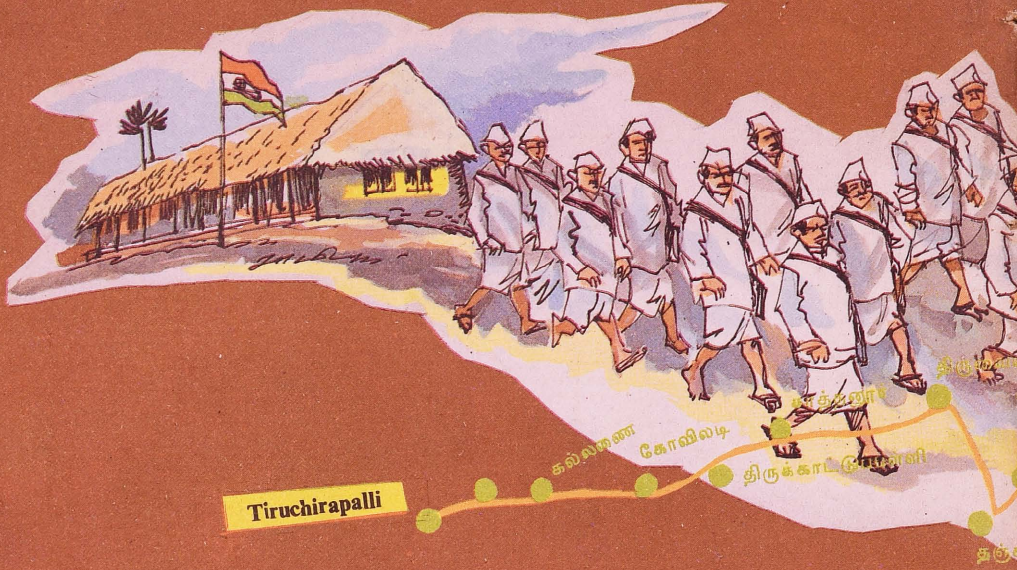
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