

The salt march by Gandhi

Bastiaan [REDACTED]

Today, people are not that quite positive about salt, but it is necessary for the human body. Long ago, people got their salt from an animal's raw meat. Later, people moved from hunting to farming, changing their diet to vegetables and grains; so people needed extra salt. Because everybody needs salt, it is a good tax-revenue for governments. Because the British government who controlled India had a high tax on salt, Indian people thought this was used to keep them under their thumb.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the person who came with the idea of nonviolent¹ protest to gain independence. He grew up in the west of India, and studied law at the Inner Temple. His law firm did not have a lot of clients and he accepted work in South-Africa.

In England, everybody was more or less treated the same; when he got to South-Africa, he was removed from the train because "a coloured man can *never* have enough money to sit in the first class". This confrontation made him look to the world differently. When he returned to India, he led nationwide campaigns for easing² poverty, expanding women right and achieving Swaraj (self-governance³).

Gandhi wanted to protest British law in a peaceful way to gain its independence from Britain. This salt tax was a symbol of British oppression, because in Britain this tax did not exist anymore. Gandhi decided to march to the Arabian Sea, a journey of 386 kilometres, to collect salt from the sea. Because he was a public figure, this march attracted media attention and the British rulers did not dare to arrest him. Gandhi collected salt himself, which was unlawful at that moment, but soon the British made an agreement that made it legal for people to collect and manufacture their own salt.

Gandhi didn't have to walk – he could have taken the train or bus to the sea. He knew what he was doing. His march was a symbolic protest to attract media attention and inspire people to do the same. Mainly because of the campaigns by Gandhi's nonviolent protests, Britain finally gave India independence after eighty-nine years of occupation. Gandhi's method of nonviolent protest inspired others, including Martin Luther King to seek change.



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¹ Without violence

² Easing: Making it more accepted in society

³ Self-governance: Ability to rule a country by yourself without help of an external country (e.g. England)

McGrath, Jane. "Why did Gandhi march 240 miles for salt?" 20 April 2009. HowStuffWorks.com.
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