

## CHAPTER 6

# Imagining the Indian Nation

## *The Design of Gandhi's Dandi March and Nehru's Republic Day Parade*

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The rhetoric of nationalism gained momentum in India in the first half of the twentieth century as the anti-imperialist movement to achieve political independence from the British intensified. It continued in a different form after independence in 1947 as the task of nation building became the main preoccupation. Design was harnessed powerfully, in both the colonial period and after, to concretize and make visible the abstract notion of 'nation', making nationalism an indispensable lens for a fuller understanding of design in modern India. Equally, design becomes an indispensable lens through which to examine the ways in which nationalism is reified in a globalized Indian present.

Scholars have explored this theme from diverse disciplinary perspectives, revealing the manner and modes in which the 'nation' has been manifested in India's visual and material culture and shaped by it. They have examined domains as diverse as print media, textiles, advertising, handicraft, national exhibitions, documentary films, television programming, museums, architecture and the planning of cities and industrial townships (Guha-Thakurta 1992, 2004; Jain, K. 2007; Kalia 1994, 1999, 2004; Lang, Desai and Desai 1997; Mathur 2007; McGowan 2009; Pinney 2004; Roy 2007; Tarlo 1996; Trivedi 2007). This chapter approaches the theme from the perspective of political practice to unravel the ways in which design is harnessed in mass mobilization and statecraft, viewing political leaders as designers. It focuses on two spectacles: M.K. Gandhi's Dandi March and Jawaharlal Nehru's Republic Day Parade, two events chronologically placed on either side of that historic event, India's independence.

The Dandi March was devised and staged by Gandhi in 1930 to mobilize Indians in an expression of resistance to the colonial order and the Republic Day Parade, an annual ritual staged from 1951 onwards, as a celebration of India's political sovereignty. At the heart of the design of both events is the imagination and animation of a viable national identity and their designers, Gandhi and Nehru, employed similar design devices. Yet, the way in which these devices were developed and deployed point to two very different conceptions of India, two distinct sets of intended outcomes that finally result in two different modes of longevity in the globalized present.

## The Dandi March

Central to Gandhi's political practice was *satyagraha* or 'firmness in truth', a mode of non-violent civil disobedience which he conceived in South Africa in 1905 to mobilize the local Indian community to protest against the injustices perpetrated by the Transvaal government. Later, on his return to India, he launched a series of *satyagrahas* on issues such as indigo farmers' rights, working conditions in textile mills, unjust legislations and iniquitous taxes levied by the British government and social inclusion for India's marginalized communities. The Salt Satyagraha of 1930, of which the Dandi March was the dramatic component, centred on a protest against the tax on salt. It was Gandhi's largest mass mobilization, involving the participation of hundreds of thousands of women and men all over India.

The Dandi March was carefully and strategically designed. This chapter focuses on six principal design aspects of the event: the choice of the issue – salt; deciding the publics it would reach out to – Indians, the British, and an international audience; choosing a mode to animate the issue – the march; the timing; the route; and, lastly, the composition of the marching group. Through these, the contours of the India of Gandhi's imagination come into view.

In December 1929, at its annual session at Lahore, the Indian National Congress resolved to fight for *purna swaraj* or complete independence from British rule. A few weeks later, on 26 January 1930, a formal pledge of independence was read out and the responsibility for mass mobilization to achieve this goal was vested in Gandhi. In mid-February, Gandhi decided to focus on the exploitative Salt Law as the issue around which to mobilize people.

India was one of very few countries where the State had monopoly over salt manufacture and sale. In 1930, the British government levied a 2400 per cent tax over the wholesale price of locally manufactured salt in order to create a market for salt imported from Britain. It was a time of rising prices and falling wages and as a result the burden of the tax fell heavily on the poorer sections of Indian society (Phadke 2000: 142; Weber 1997: 81–84). As

an object of everyday use, salt provided a common rallying point across caste, class, religious and regional identities that made up the diversity of India. Its cultural associations in both Indian and Western traditions as symbol of all that is critical to human survival and exalted in human relationships (as reflected in myriad proverbs in many Indian languages and English) made it possible to take the campaign of breaking the Salt Law beyond the political plane to generate tremendous ethical and emotional appeal the world over.

Gandhi's colleagues were horrified at what appeared to them as a trivial issue on which to base a fight for *purna swaraj*; many Congress leaders thought a nationwide breaking of land laws or forming a parallel government were more forceful options. But this was no flight of fancy. Trained as a lawyer, Gandhi knew that the penal sections of the Salt Law were not severe and large numbers could therefore be persuaded to participate. The law offered a number of options for breaking it – manufacturing salt, possessing illegally manufactured salt, selling or buying it and even exhorting to sell or buy it were all breaches of the law. Thus people could participate in a variety of ways, it was replicable all over the country and the campaign could be localized and customized according to regional constraints. For instance, in inland areas where salt could not be manufactured, salt from the coast could be bought or sold.

Then came the question of animating the issue. Gandhi chose to march to the seashore to collect sea salt, combining the emotive power of salt as a symbol with another equally powerful one, the march. He had already led a long march in South Africa in 1913 where he and 2221 people marched from Charlestown to Volksrust to protest against the Immigration Act. Now, he declared he would march out from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to break the Salt Law, never to return till *purna swaraj* was attained. He likened it to Moses leading his people to the Promised Land, the Hindu Lord Rama leaving his kingdom to honour a promise made to his father and Gautama's *mahabhinishkramana* or 'great departure' in search of the enlightenment which eventually made him the Buddha. Gandhi could easily have made a quick march from Ahmedabad, his base in western India, to the nearest seashore on the western coast of India but he chose Dandi, a place sufficiently far away so the march would become a long-drawn out spectacle generating wide publicity. As he wrote later, he wanted 'world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might' (Gandhi 1999: 13).

The route was plotted by Gandhi's colleague Vallabhbhai Patel, strategically taking the march through all the areas south of Ahmedabad where the Indian National Congress was well established, ending at Dandi, a village to which some of Gandhi's South African colleagues belonged. The departure date, 12 March, was chosen such that the 241-mile distance between Ahmedabad and Dandi would be covered in twenty-five days of daily walking instalments of about ten miles so that the march could be concluded on 6 April. This was a significant date as it marked the start of

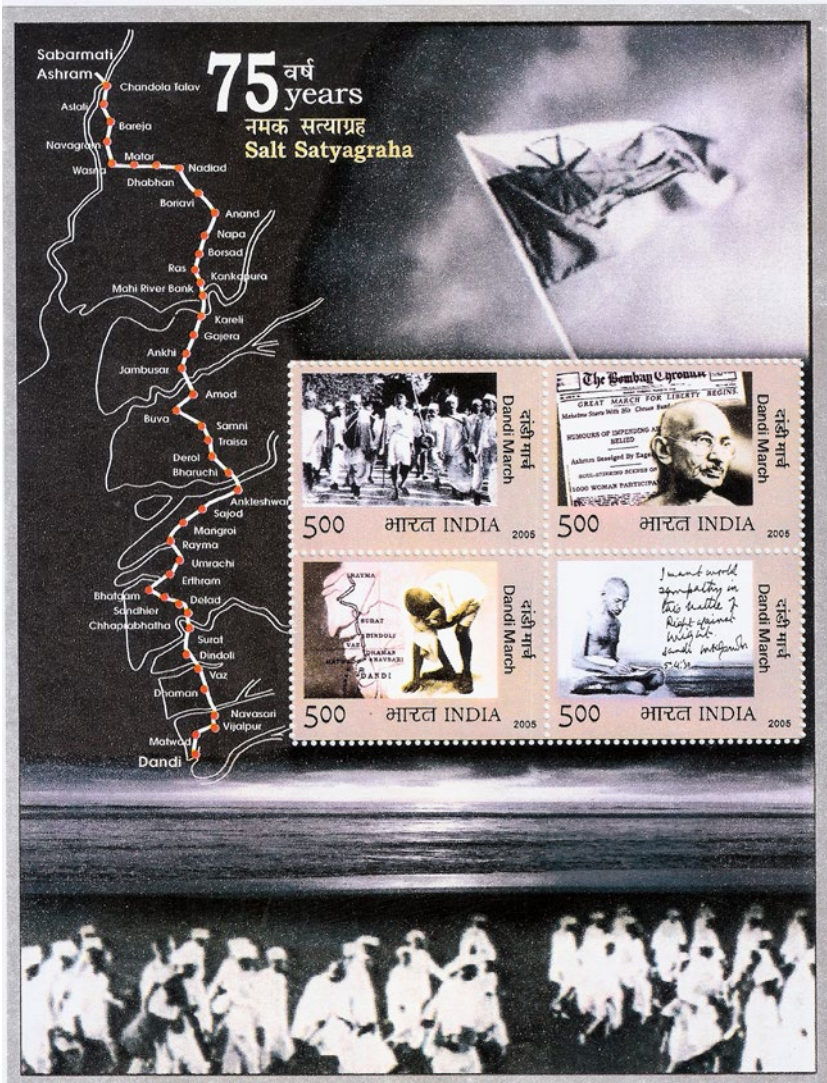
National Week, which had been celebrated since 1920 to commemorate an earlier *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Act (a legislation which curtailed civil and political rights) in 1919. Thus, layers of intertextual and interdiscursive references were built into the design elements that went into constructing the Dandi March.

Finally, the composition of the contingent of marchers: Gandhi selected members of the group mostly from among the residents of Sabarmati Ashram to represent the diversity of Indians. The seventy-eight men who accompanied him were among those who were most committed to the Gandhian way of life, purposively drawn from all the provinces of India and including Muslims, 5 May Christians, and high and low caste Hindus, from ordinary and well-to-do family backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Women were not included in the main group of marchers;<sup>2</sup> however, he selected his colleagues Abbas Tyabji, a Muslim, and Sarojini Naidu, a prominent woman Congress leader, to replace him as leader of the group in the event of his arrest.

The group set off from Sabarmati Ashram at dawn on 12 March. The group's cultural diversity was visually unified by elements from the Gandhian ethos. The marchers all wore *khadi* (unbleached, hand spun, hand woven cotton) giving the contingent a distinct appearance and corporate identity that marked them apart from other Indians. For the preceding decade, Gandhi had relentlessly promoted hand spinning and weaving and had made wearing *khadi* mandatory for anyone choosing to join his movement. *Aparigraha*, abstaining from accumulating material possessions, was another of Gandhi's mandates; so all seventy-eight men carried the barest personal possessions. They ate the simplest food at every village halt on the way and began each day of the march with an all-faith prayer to communicate the value of the simple life and equality of all faiths in a land of rampant poverty and religious strife.

The group reached Dandi on 6 April where they picked up handfuls of dried salt from the seashore, thereby breaking the law. Thousands of men and women joined them along the way to Dandi; simultaneous marches, with many variations, took place all over India to numerous places on the country's southern, eastern and western coasts and the Salt Law was broken on the same day in all the variety of ways the legal provisions afforded. The world press reported the event on a day-to-day basis and newsreels depicted the marchers in cinema halls. The infringement of the Salt Law continued over the following weeks and Gandhi was arrested on 5 May 1930, as were about 90,000 *satyagrahis* over the next months. In early 1931, Gandhi was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine as Man of the Year, a measure of the international impact of the event.<sup>3</sup> This was the anatomy of the design of the Dandi March. The event, as it was assembled and visually presented, revealed the India of Gandhi's imagination. This was a courageous India, where religious differences and social hierarchies were acknowledged but transcended through joint participation in a protest against an imperial power symbolized by a law which exploited the poor and

the rich alike. In a land where clothes, food and personal belief set apart communities in appearance and lifestyle (see Tarlo 1996), the Gandhian lifestyle, adopted and exemplified by the marchers, was how he imagined everyday life in an independent India – a life of equality, freedom, simplicity, self-determination and cooperation.



**Figure 6.1** Miniature sheet of four postage stamps released on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Salt Satyagrah in 2005 depicting Gandhi leading the march, the route, newspaper coverage of the event and his message. The photograph at the bottom shows the visual appearance of the group. Photograph by the author.

## **The Republic Day Parade**

We turn now to the Republic Day Parade to examine the orchestration of the event along the same six principal design elements focused upon for the Dandi March: the issue – celebrating India's independence from the British and the adoption of a new Constitution of India and thereby, the creation of the new republic; deciding the publics to reach out to – national and international; choosing a mode to animate the issue – the parade; its timing; the route; and the composition of the marching group.

The Dandi March was designed to mobilize the mass of Indians in a movement for complete independence from British rule. Independence was finally achieved seventeen years later in August 1947. Gandhi was assassinated in early 1948 and the task of nation building was taken over by his colleagues, some of whom we have met in the preceding pages. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister and the process of articulating nationhood in a written Constitution, which had commenced in 1946, became the main preoccupation. After four years of discussion and debate, India gave herself a new Constitution in 1950 and the sovereign and democratic Indian state came into existence. In a public address, Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel (who had crafted the route for the Dandi March) observed that 'the day on which India attains republican status would be written in letters of gold in its history', when 'all traces of foreign rule' were erased and Indians became 'in law and in fact [their] own masters' (quoted in Masselos 1996: 190). But which day in the year could be designated to bear that honour?

As mentioned earlier, the Indian National Congress had formalized its resolve to fight for complete independence through the pledge read out on 26 January 1930. From the following year onwards, the day had been celebrated as Independence Day. However, real independence, with a transfer of power, took place on 15 August 1947. So 26 January could no longer be celebrated as Independence Day. Yet it held too much political significance to be simply set aside. Therefore, it was chosen as the day for the official adoption of the Constitution, linking the inauguration of assertion against colonial rule with its conclusion in the attainment of the status of a republic. From then on it came to be celebrated as Republic Day. It was a momentous occasion and the task before the political leaders of India was to devise a way to first re-consecrate the day and then honour and celebrate it.

On the morning of the first Republic Day celebrations in 1950, India's first President took oath of office in the presidential palace in the capital New Delhi, promising to uphold the Constitution and subsequently swearing in the Prime Minister and his cabinet of ministers. Similar ceremonies took place in the provinces where governors took oath and swore in chief ministers and their cabinet colleagues and the provinces became states in the new republic. In the afternoon, the President drove to Irwin Stadium where he was received by the

Minister of Defence, who in turn ceremonially introduced him to the chiefs of the army, navy and air force. The President raised the national flag and bands played the national anthem. He then took salute at a march past of the armed forces and a fly past of air force planes.

A differently articulated Republic Day Parade took place the following year on the first anniversary of the republic, becoming the principal mode to animate the birth of the Indian republic and articulate national identity and nation building. Although the event underwent modifications over the next several years, its defining elements were already in place in the first couple of years. These elements were visualized largely by Nehru, which is why this chapter regards him as the designer of the event. Nehru's writings offer a clue to understanding his approach. While in prison in 1942–1946, he wrote *Discovery of India*, in which he anticipated independence, already planning the new nation, dreaming of giving India the 'garb of modernity' without letting go of her glorious past (Nehru 1986: 50). He wrote, 'Traditions have to be accepted to a large extent and adapted and transformed to meet new conditions and ways of thought, and at the same time new traditions have to be built up' (Nehru 1986: 53). These lines offer a framework to examine the Republic Day Parade, as he visualized and designed it, as an adaptation and transformation of traditional national commemorations, thereby forging an annually reiterated new national tradition.

Thus, on 26 January 1951, the ceremonies began in the morning and at a new location, Rajpath, where it has been staged ever since. The setting was no longer a sports stadium but a landscape replete with symbols of state. Rajpath (formerly Kingsway) is a ceremonial stretch of road linking the presidential palace, Rashtrapati Bhavan (formerly Viceroy's House) with India Gate, a memorial to Indian soldiers in the British Army. As in the previous year, the President arrived in state, unfurled the flag, the national anthem was sung and contingents of the armed forces marched down Rajpath saluting their commander in chief. In their new setting, the celebrations began to take on the character of a spectacle.

Gandhi self-consciously linked the Dandi March to earlier, if mythical, marches; the Republic Day Parade ironically drew from colonial rituals and, perhaps inevitably, from Congress party models of anti-imperialist mobilization. The setting and military presence were reminiscent of the Imperial Durbars such as the one in 1877 organized in Delhi to proclaim Victoria as Empress of India and repeated in 1903 and 1911 to announce Edward VII as Kaiser-i-Hind and George V as King Emperor of India. Native princes and chiefs were invited to ritually express their allegiance to the reigning sovereign. The morning flag hoisting, accompanied by a rendition of the national anthem, harked back to pre-1947 Independence Day celebrations. Then, 26 January celebrations began with *prabhat pheris*, or morning processions, of Congress party activists winding their way through the streets singing patriotic songs, eventually gathering at a

central spot, usually the party office, to raise the Gandhi-designed national flag and sing the national song, *Vande Mataram*.<sup>4</sup>

While the structure of the parade drew from earlier models and began with references from the immediate past, its destination harked back to earlier glory. The parade marched down Rajpath and wound its way northwards through the city ending at the Red Fort, the seventeenth-century seat of power of the Mughal Empire. Other allusions to erstwhile empires lay in the national symbols showcased on the occasion. Replacing the spinning wheel in the pre-independence flag was the Ashokan wheel, a symbol appropriated from the two-thousand-year old Mauryan Empire, and the four lions from the Ashokan pillar became the crest of the state of India. Thus the parade to celebrate the new republic became a montage of intertextual references to various configurations of erstwhile empires and a just-concluded anti-imperialist struggle.

The following year, Nehru's government consciously and explicitly set the celebrations apart from national day celebrations of other countries by adding a cultural pageant to the military display. A Ministry of Education note of 1952 stated that this was done to communicate that 'this young Republic values cultural progress no less than military strength' (quoted in Singh 1998: 92), transforming the parade from a military ritual to one that served to symbolically unite the new republic by drawing its culturally diverse population into a meaningful 'new tradition'. To set the tone, art exhibitions, music and dance festivals, literary gatherings and sports meets were organized in the days preceding the parade.

The addition of the cultural pageant was made at a time when the process of reorganizing existing British-demarcated provinces into states was underway. It was a period of tension when linguistic and regional assertions were making their presence felt and rendering the visual communication of a viable, cohesive national identity, while simultaneously making space for cultural multiplicity, became urgent. Planning for the next year's parade, Nehru wrote to the Chief Ministers of states in late 1952 explaining that the 'concept of this procession and exhibition and everything else should be to demonstrate both the unity and great variety and diversity of India' and that this could happen if 'states participate in these Delhi celebrations and take some responsibility for them' (quoted in Singh 1998: 98). Each state was invited to send a tableau representing some distinctive feature of its people, performing arts, crafts and architecture, displaying India's rich diversity of regional costumes, dance forms and music along with dioramas and models of famous monuments. While representatives from the different states participated in their traditional costumes, the parade was enlarged to visually showcase the 'garb of modernity' of the newly constituted state. Nehru suggested that a part of the parade display could depict 'the Grow-More-Food campaign' with a tableau representing the abundance of food and that farmers winning state competitions for agricultural production





**Figure 6.2** View of cultural floats displayed at the Republic Day Parade, 2013. Photograph by Sondeep Shankar.



**Figure 6.3** The Indian Army's BrahMos cruise missiles displayed at the Republic Day Parade, 2013. Photograph by Sondeep Shankar.

should be invited to Delhi at the government's expense to participate in the parade (quoted in Singh 1998: 98). Later, representations of dams, power plants, the launching of satellites and atomic power plants found a place in the parade. On the fiftieth anniversary of the republic in 2000, a specially commissioned

float featured a large replica of the Constitution propped up on three pillars labelled 'democracy', 'legislature' and 'judiciary'.

Nehru was equally clear about the audience for whom this display was being put on. He visualized it as a cultural festival designed to make an impact on national and international audiences, 'to impress not only the important representatives of foreign governments who witness the parade but also hundreds of thousands of our own people, to whom the Republic Day celebrations should be both a source of joy and pride and an aspiration' (quoted in Singh 1998: 95). Each year a foreign head of state was invited as chief guest, invariably chosen in keeping with current realpolitik. At the first ceremony at Irwin Stadium it was Indonesian President Sukarno, Nehru's comrade in the Non-Aligned Movement of postcolonial states coming together to counter Russia and the United States; in 1961 it was Queen Elizabeth; and in 2007 Vladimir Putin.

Thus, the Republic Day Parade was a new tradition which symbolically brought together the industrial and the cultural, the past and the present, hand-crafts and the machine. At the same time, it communicated powerfully to two very different but equally important audiences that Nehru wished to reach, the local and global. To his citizens he communicated the new programmes undertaken by the State to rebuild India and its concrete achievements through these initiatives. Simultaneously, he wished to underline that the arts were equally central to the Republic and represented its linkages to a glorious past which was to be the fountainhead for a flourishing future. To his global audience, the Parade communicated a resurgent India determined to bring material and cultural prosperity to her citizens and asserting herself as an independent nation free of her colonial masters. An estimated 200,000 people witnessed the procession in person; a live commentary was broadcast on radio to millions of listeners all over the country and in the 1980s, live telecasts brought the event visually into people's homes and with it, the idea of becoming and being Indian in modern India.

## **The Afterlife of the March and Parade**

On 12 March 1931 Gandhi left Ahmedabad for Dandi again to explain to the people his pact with Viceroy Irwin after his release from prison. He left on the same day, by the same route. But this time he went by car and reached Dandi in two days. There was no public participation, no persuasive speeches and no religious imagery. For Gandhi, salt and the march to Dandi had been chosen to fulfil a particular set of historical circumstances and once the situation had changed they no longer had any relevance and had outlived their usefulness. In fact, when the movement was restarted in 1932, centred again on disobeying the Salt Law, contemporary accounts noted the lack of enthusiasm. There have

been subsequent, largely unsuccessful re-enactments by Indian politicians and activists of all stripes seeking to cash in on the symbols of Gandhi's *satyagraha* to further their own particular agendas.<sup>5</sup> But the event lived on in ways that its designer had neither intended nor anticipated, when its appeal lay in interpretative re-enactments. I will examine two examples which speak of the meaning that artists at two different locations outside India saw in that event of 1930 and which contribute to its afterlife.

Fiona Foley is a contemporary artist from Australia. Her art draws from her life as an indigenous woman from a community whose culture has a living memory of its colonization by the English. Her work both reflects her connection to her aboriginal identity and challenges Australian culture to reread history to reveal moments of strength and empowerment. In April 2005, at a group show entitled *Out There* at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich, Foley joined seven other renowned artists to create site-specific outdoor works. Foley's contribution was *Dandi March (rowing boat, khadi bags, salt)*. On display in an open wooded field were 241 white, salt-filled bags, one for each mile that Gandhi walked. Four bags stood separately with the words SALT, BRITISH, KHADI and GANDHI in red. Nearby, a small red rowing boat was placed upside down as a metaphor for maritime trade routes and the coast of Dandi. Uniting these elements was a paisley motif mown directly into the grass, pointing to the Norwich shawls which adapted the motif from shawls sent by colonial officers in India to their wives at home.<sup>6</sup>

Joseph DeLappe is a performance artist and art professor whose work inquisitively engages with issues of memory, politics, history, physicality and the virtual. He believes that it is essential for him, as an artist and as a citizen of the world, to engage in and challenge the norms and expectations of the digital present and the larger cultural context.<sup>7</sup> In 2008, in his *Re-enactment: The Salt Satyagraha Online*, he walked the 241 miles of the original march, starting his performance on 12 March and ending it on 6 April, at Eyebeam Art and Technology at New York and on Second Life, the web-based virtual world. He walked on a treadmill customized for cyberspace such that each step he took controlled the forward movement of his avatar, MGandhi Chakrabarti, on Second Life, thus enabling a simultaneously real and virtual re-enactment. For those twenty-five days, he interacted with visitors from all over the world who had logged onto Second Life in their various avatars. He told them about the march, answered their questions and some of them joined him on the walk in cyberspace just like the many who joined Gandhi in 1930. The route in Second Life took him to digital simulations of Tiananmen Square where MGandhi Chakrabarti came face to face with a tank, Guantanamo Bay Detention Centre and a 'Palestinian Holocaust Museum' still under construction, evoking contemporary conflicts and human rights abuses. The last day was at a virtual Dandi memorial. The following year, DeLappe performed *Gandhi in Prison on Second*



**Figure 6.4** DeLappe on treadmill with Gandhi avatar in background. Photo by Laurie A. Macfee, courtesy of Joseph DeLappe.



**Figure 6.5** Gandhi avatar at Dandi monument with other avatars. Photo courtesy of Joseph DeLappe.

*Life*, re-enacting Gandhi's days in prison after the Dandi March to the accompaniment of readings from Torture Memos of the Bush era.

The examples show that both the Dandi March, the symbol of salt in particular, and the larger context of the Salt Satyagraha become available to everyone as human beings with agency, responding to their time in the way Gandhi responded to his. The Dandi March's anti-establishment intent seems to invest it with a motive power which spirals outwards in its impact. These interpretations of the Dandi March reflect the changing contours of India and the world, and India-in-the-world where invoking that event of 1930 offers an expanded space for protest and the expression of human agency in the global present.

If the Dandi March opens an international space for contemporary interpretation outside of itself, the Republic Day Parade, with its continuing preoccupation with the idea of projecting the Indian nation, offers space for political expression within itself. Again, we examine two examples for insights into the unfolding dynamic of the event through reconfigurations of the military and cultural segments of the parade from within and without. The idea of the cultural display as 'a moving pageant of India in its rich diversity' bore within it its own contradictions. Nehru's enthusiasm was institutionalized into government guidelines to the states for proposals for tableaux scrupulously emphasizing authenticity and seeking assurance 'that the selected dance is a genuine folk dance and the costumes and musical instruments are traditional and authentic' (quoted in Jain, J. 2007).

An officer of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (the national institution for the preservation of dance and musical forms) who has been associated with the Republic Day Folk Dance Festival preceding the parade reveals the limits of such bureaucratic safeguards. According to him, as time went on, dancers at these festivals were often urban, sometimes college students and even actresses, who rehearsed in Delhi to create 'folk' dances for the festival. State governments allotted money for buying new costumes for troupes representing them in Delhi; officials who either had no idea of local traditions, or could not care less, bought the wrong fabrics and colours in an effort to make the state's presentation attractive. Ironically, dance historians use images from these annual festivals to illustrate their books on Indian folk dances, which in turn become academic sources for reference (Jain, J. 2007).

To add to this, Nehru also wanted to give India 'the garb of modernity' and through industrial and scientific projects improve the quality of everyday life in India. The Nagas, Santhals and Bhils whose culture he found 'so attractive' have modernized and urbanized. But state tableaux, in search for the chimera of 'authenticity', present them in romanticized depictions as 'children of nature' with forest backdrops, often derived from colonial anthropological archives (Jain, J. 2007).

The transformations in the military display show a different inward trajectory. In late 1962, India and China went to war which ended with a humiliating conclusion for India. In the parade of 1963 soon after, both the military and cultural displays were cancelled and replaced with a civilian procession of Prime Minister Nehru and his cabinet colleagues, political representatives from different states, chancellors, deans, professors and students of Delhi University, a thousand representatives of the national trade unions, two thousand women and four thousand children in a show of national solidarity. In contrast, in 2000, India's conflict with Pakistan in Kashmir was manifested in victory tableaux accompanied by displays of the weaponry which won the battle. In each of these situations, the military segment of the parade was used to compose a narrative of the nation as a cohesive entity, united against threats from outside (Roy 2007: 83; Jain, J. 2007).

But what of internal dissension? Through all the intervening decades there have been many moments when different regions of India have resisted the state and their resistance has even taken the form of armed struggle, often to the point of threatening secession. However, the script of the parade, by definition, does not permit space for this kind of expression. It would amount to an existential crisis if it did. The Republic Day Parade, and the deeper power structure in which its design elements are embedded, domesticates the human being with agency into obedient citizens and passive spectators who buy tickets for a place in the audience. Designed to be repeated annually to the same script with greater and greater degrees of inauthenticity, it lives on in an ever-tightening entropic spiral. In celebrating the nation in the form of a scripted bureaucratic ritual of obedience, with its references to empire, the parade offers no space for interpretation or expression, pointing to an increasingly intractable Indian state. The only way its space can be entered is by disruption in the form of demonstrations, and boycotts of official Republic Day celebrations. As a result, the parade now takes place under elaborate security arrangements and the President takes salute in a transparent bulletproof enclosure. A day whose origins lay in anti-imperialist protest is now the site of protest against the very idea of nationhood that it seeks to symbolize and celebrate.

## **Conclusion**

Placing the Dandi March and Republic Day Parade side by side reveals that they share many structural elements – both were varieties of marches designed, in content and form, as symbolically coded performances alluding to historical events and images in order to reach out to domestic and international publics. The diversity of India and Indians was central to the way both were imagined. The juxtaposition also reveals the fact that the two events diverged dramatically in the way these design devices were deployed. If the Dandi March was

visualized as a one-off event, the Republic Day Parade was designed as one that that would be repeated annually. While the Dandi March was coded with the quality of each-according-to-his-own-capacity, the Republic Day parade was designed so that replication was achieved by bureaucratic diktat and reproduced at the state level with holographic exactitude. Flowing from this is the important difference in the location of Indians on the axes of participation and spectatorship. For the Dandi March, people were imagined as participants in the creation of a preferred future; the Parade regarded people as performers and spectators, and in both roles as recipients of a state-imagined preferred future.

And what conception of India did each embody? The composition of the marching contingent to Dandi pointed to India's social, religious, regional diversity but visually united in *khadi*, their differences dissolved and resolved in a fellowship of the simple life and self-sufficiency. More importantly, diversity was coded into the event in a completely different way with the possibility of varied participation, each according to his or her ability. In the Republic Day Parade, diversity was visually emphasized, made explicit in dress and dance, with participants ostensibly united by their citizenship of the new state. If disobedience was the leitmotif of the Dandi March, then obedience and routinized falling-in-line was the organizing principal of the Republic Day Parade. In these last two aspects lies the nature of longevity of the two events.

The accounts and analyses of the design of the two events explored in this chapter pose several provocations for the writing of national design histories in a global context. First, it suggests that design historiography might be productively expanded if it were to move beyond normative notions of design as manifested by existing categories such as industrial design, visual communication, fashion and so on. By exploring a domain such as political practice and statecraft the chapter suggests a methodological shift which illuminates how design imagination and design praxis is deployed by agents who have hitherto not been considered designers, thus opening up a rich ground for fresh exploration in diverse global settings.

Flowing from this is a second provocation: how may design history illuminate political design as well as the politics of design in colonial and postcolonial settings? The chapter has attempted to explore the ways in which design is implicated in the visualization of the notion of 'nation'. It offers a reciprocal lens whereby the evolution of a particular strand of Indian nationalism in the context of the country's colonial experience is revealed through design, and the examination of that strand in turn reveals design as a space and mode of action in the political domain.

Lastly, in exploring the afterlife of the two events, this chapter opens up a discussion within design scholarship on the agency of design and designers in the global present. It suggests the contingent nature of agency in the two case studies, yet points to the ways in which agency is transferred to new actors, or is seized by them, in response to the exigencies of the global present. In so doing

it throws fresh light on the essential iterative nature of design as ever a work in progress.

## Notes

1. The South African march of 1913 was a mass upsurge of all who were adversely affected by the Immigration Act. The Dandi March, in comparison, was deliberately designed and strategically crafted as symbolic communication.

2. Women were not included since Gandhi felt that their presence would give him unfair advantage over the British who would feel constrained about taking decisive action against a group which included women. For details about the selection of marchers see Weber (1997: 90, 104–109).

3. For a detailed account of the Salt Satyagraha see Weber (1997) and for an analysis of Gandhi's communication strategy see Suchitra (1995).

4. See Masselos 1996: 191–194 and Roy 2007: 71–75 for detailed discussions of the Republic Day Parade's colonial and anti-imperialist lineages.

5. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi re-enacted the march in 1991.

6. Details of Foley's artistic approach retrieved 16 March 2014 from <http://www.ndoylefineart.com/foley.html>, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiona\\_Foley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiona_Foley). Images of Foley's work can be seen at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lwr/28695845/in/set-647026>

7. Details of DeLappe's artistic approach retrieved 18 March 2014 from <http://www.delappe.net/words/artists-statement/>. Daily accounts of DeLappe's Salt March can be viewed at <http://saltmarchsecondlife.wordpress.com/2008/03/>

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