

Excerpt- Monologue from a Woman Satyagrahi Questioning Gandhi. (Performed at Sanskriti School)

Bapu,

When I first came to Sabarmati, I spun khadi till my fingers bled.
They said this is a woman's work, weaving the khadi of freedom.
I believed them.

But when I heard of your Dandi March, seventy-eight men marching to the sea,
I came running. I wanted to walk beside you, barefoot on the salt road.
And yet, you smiled your soft smile and said,
"Not now, beti. This march will be hard. We do not keep women before us when going to war."

You said once in *Young India*, 1921, "Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities."

And yet, in 1930, as your feet set out for Dandi,
mine were told to stay back because the British might think you cowardly,
because they might say Indian men hide behind women to avoid brutality.

How careful the men of freedom are with our fragility,
as if the lathi knows the difference between a man's rib and a woman's spine.

So I stayed behind, watching the ashram empty,
till I could bear the spinning wheel no more.
When I saw your photo in the newspaper,
you had already lifted that fistful of earth,
and the men cheered as if the sea itself had been freed.

But there, behind you in the photograph,
stood Mithuben Petit, her eyes bright with the reflection of a revolution that hadn't invited her.
And Sarojini Naidu, who had come by car because no road had been paved for her feet.
We were not on your list, Bapu.
But we have a way of slipping through cracks like salt.

Then you were arrested, and the men were scattered.
And the salt, ah, the salt became ours.
It crusted on our hands as we boiled brine at Chowpatty,
as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay faced the police with a wicker basket of salt held high,
as Sarojini Naidu led the march on Dharasana Salt Works,
her white sari turning red beneath the batons of police brutality,
and still she sang, "Hail Mother India."
And still we sang, "Hail Mother India."

Perhaps when salt is born from the womb of the ocean, it must not pass through the hands that rock cradles.

You wrote in *Young India*, April 10th,
"Let the women of India take up spinning and prohibition."
But Bapu, we took up salt instead.

And salt, the tear of the sea,
after all, is a woman's birthright.
We have tasted it in sweat, in hunger, in the sting of grief that outlasts generations.
We flavor your food, your faith, your freedom, and yet, we must beg for a fistful of our own.

I do not resent you.
I revere you.
But I also remind you:
you broke the law of the empire,
we broke the law of silence.

A fistful too light, perhaps,
but still enough to flavor freedom.