

Chapter- 5

INDIGO

By- LOUIS FISCHER

SUB CONCEPTS

- Sharecropping- a curse.
- Effective leadership can overcome any problem.
- The injustice of the landlord system in Bihar.
- Sharecroppers were exploited by the English Landlords
- Justice for the oppressed in the Champaran district.

Introduction to the Topic and the details of the writer Louis Fischer

- A Journalist and wrote for 'The New York Times', 'The Saturday Review' and for European and Asian publications.
- A member of the faculty at Princeton University.
- This work is an excerpt taken from his book 'The Life of Mahatma'.

VIDEO RESOURCES

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX_z1tWy18o
Revisiting Champaran Satyagraha
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kg8IidoHADg>
Champaran Agitation from Gandhi Movie

INTRODUCTION

The chapter reveals how Gandhiji's struggled for the poor peasants of Champaran District who were sharecroppers with the British Planters. The story is based on the interview taken by Louis Fischer of Mahatma Gandhi. To write on him he had visited him in 1942 at his ashram- Sevagram where he was told about the Indigo movement started by Gandhiji. The story revolves around the struggle of Gandhi and other prominent leaders to safeguard sharecroppers from the atrocities of landlords.

Lesson initiation with comprehensive explanations–

- Raj Kumar Shukla, a poor sharecropper wished to meet Gandhiji to complain about the injustice of the landlord system in Champaran.
 - Shukla followed Gandhi everywhere and begged him to fix a date to come to his district.
 - Gandhi was much impressed and fixed a schedule.
 - Gandhi and Shukla reached Patna to meet Rajendra Prasad but he was out of town.
 - Then decided to go to Muzzafarpur first to get detailed information about Champaran sharecroppers.
 - Sent telegram J B Kripalani and stayed in Prof. Malkani's home-a government servant.
 - Indians were afraid to show sympathy to the supporters of home rule.
 - The news of Gandhi's arrival spread- sharecroppers gathered in large numbers to meet their champion.
 - Gandhi chided the Muzzafarpur lawyers for taking a high fee from poor sharecroppers.
- Champaran district was divided into estate owned by English people, Indians were only tenant farmers.

Lesson continuation with comprehensive explanations –(Pages: 49-51)

- Landlords compelled tenants to plant 15% of their land with indigo and surrender their entire harvest as rent.
- In the meantime Germany had developed synthetic indigo- British landlords freed the Indian farmers from the 15% arrangement but asked them to pay compensation.
- Many signed some resisted, engaged lawyers, landlords hired thugs.
- Gandhi reached Champaran- visited the secretary of the British landlord association to get the facts but denied as he was an outsider.
- Gandhi went to the British Official Commissioner who asked him to leave Thirut.
- Gandhi disobeyed, went to Motihari the capital of Champaran where a vast multitude greeted him, continued his investigations.
- Visited maltreated villagers- stopped by the police superintendent but disobeyed the order.
- Motihari black with peasants- spontaneous demonstrations.
- Gandhi released without bail- Civil Disobedience triumphed.
- The battle of Champaran is Won.
- The whole area throbbled with the activity of the investigators and the vehement protest of landlords.

Lesson continuation with comprehensive explanations –(Pages:51-54)

- The official inquiry assembled a crushing mountain of evidence against the big planters.

- Gandhi agreed to 25% refund by the landowners, thus breaking the deadlock.
- This symbolizes the surrender of the prestige of British landlords.
- Gandhiji worked hard towards social-economic reforms.
- Gandhiji taught a lesson of self-reliance.

QUESTIONS FOR COMPREHENSION

- 1) List the places that Gandhi visited between his first meeting with Shukla and his arrival at Champaran.
- 2) Why did the servants think Gandhiji to be another peasant?
- 3) What was the attitude of the average Indian in smaller localities towards advocates of 'home-rule'?
- 4) Why was Rajkumar Shukla described as being 'resolute'?
- 5) What happened when Rajkumar Shukla took Gandhiji to the house of Rajendra Prasad in Patna?
- 6) Why did Gandhiji decide to go to Muzzaffarpur and where did he stay there?
- 7) Why did Gandhiji decide to go to Muzzaffarpur before going to Champaran?
- 8) "The battle of Champaran is won" What led Gandhiji to make this remark?
- 9) What did the peasants pay the British landlords as rent and what did the British now want instead and why?
- 10) What would be the impact of synthetic indigo on the prices of natural indigo?
- 11) Why did the landlords compel the peasants to do as per the terms of a long-term contract?
- 12) What happened when the British planters asked the peasants for compensation for releasing them from the 15 percent agreement?
- 13) What was the outcome of four protracted interviews that Gandhi had with the Lieutenant- Governor?
- 14) How could Gandhi persuade the lawyers to follow him into jail?
- 15) How did the episode change the plight of the peasants?
- 16) How do you know that ordinary people too contributed to the freedom movement?
- 17) How did Gandhiji win the battle for the indigo sharecroppers?