
Chapter - 5

Indigo

by Louis Fischer

- Raj Kumar Shukla- A poor sharecropper from Champaran wishing to meet Gandhiji.
- Raj Kumar Shukla – illiterate but resolute, hence followed Gandhiji to Lucknow, Cawnpore, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Patna, Muzzafarpur and then Camparan.
- Servants at Rajendra Prasad’s residence thought Gandhiji to be an untouchable.
- Gandhiji considered as an untouchable because of simple living style and wearing, due to the company of Raj Kumar Shukla.
- Decided to go to Muzzafarpur first to get detailed information about Champaran sharecropper.
- Sent telegram to J B Kriplani & stayed in Prof Malkani’s home –a government servant.
- Indians afraid of showing sympathy to the supporters of home rule.
- The news of Gandhiji’s arrival spread –sharecroppers gathered in large number to meet their champion.
- Gandhiji chided the Muzzafarpur lawyer for taking high fee.
- Champaran district was divided into estate owned by English people, Indians only tenant farmers.
- 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.
- Gandhiji reached Champaran –visited the secretary of the British landlord association to get the facts but denied as he was an outsider.
- Gandhiji went to the British Official Commissioner who asked him to leave Tirhut , Gandhiji 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, Gandhiji released without bail Civil Disobedience triumphed.
- Gandhiji agreed to 25% refund by the landowners, it symbolised the surrender of the prestige.
- Gandhiji worked hard towards social economic reforms, elevated their distress aided by his wife, Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh.
- Gandhiji taught a lesson of self reliance by not seeking help of an English man Mr. Andrews.