



LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q1. What solution to the problems of the poor did Gandhi suggest?
How far did the Champaran movement help in this direction?

OR

“The real relief for them is to be free from fear”, remarked Gandhi. What do you think, was “the beginning of their liberation from the fear of the British” ?

Ans: The sharecropper peasants had to grow indigo on 15 per cent of their holdings and surrender the indigo harvest as rent to the landlord. When Germany developed synthetic indigo, the British planters started extracting money illegally and deceitfully as compensation from the peasants for being released from the 15 per cent arrangement. The peasants were made to sign new agreements and pay money. The planters behaved as lords above the law. Many peasants engaged lawyers at hefty fees and went to courts.

The Muzaffarpur lawyers briefed Gandhi about the peasants for whom they frequently represented in courts. Gandhi realised that these peasants were badly crushed and fear-stricken. Freedom from fear was more important than legal justice for them. Gandhiji was ready to court arrest for them. Thousands of peasants demonstrated spontaneously around the court. The government had to release Gandhi without bail. This voluntary uprising of the peasants marked the beginning of their liberation from the fear of the British.

Q2. Why was Gandhi summoned to appear in the court? How did he gain his liberty ?

OR

‘Civil disobedience had triumphed, the first time in modern India.’ Relate the events during Gandhi’s stay in Champaran that led to the triumph.

Ans: Gandhi had reached Motihari, the Capital of Champaran, to study the problems of the sharecropper peasants. He was on his way to a neighbouring village, where a peasant was ill-treated. On the way, he was stopped by the police superintendent’s messenger and ordered to return to town. When he reached home, he was served with an official notice to quit Champaran at once. Gandhi wrote on the receipt that he would disobey the order. So Gandhi received a summons to appear in the court the next day.

Next morning the town of Motihari was black with peasants. Thousands of peasants demonstrated voluntarily outside the court. The prosecutor requested the judge to postpone the trial. Gandhi protested against the delay. He read out a statement pleading guilty. He asked the penalty. The judge announced that he would pronounce the sentence after a two-hour recess. He asked Gandhi to furnish bail for that period. Gandhi refused. The judge released him without bail. After the recess, the judge said that he would not deliver the judgement for several days. Meanwhile he allowed Gandhi to remain at liberty.

Several days later Gandhi received a letter. The case against him had been dropped. Thus, civil disobedience had triumphed, for the first time in India.

Q3. Give an account of Gandhi’s efforts to secure justice for the

poor indigo sharecroppers of Champaran.

OR

“Indigo sharecropping disappeared.” Which factors do you think, helped to achieve freedom for the fear-stricken peasants of Champaran?

Ans: Gandhi went to Champaran on receiving reports of exploitation of the poor sharecropper peasants at the hands of British planters. He began by trying to get the facts. The British landlords as well as the Commissioner of Tirhut were non-cooperative. Lawyers from Muzaffarpur briefed him about the court cases of these peasants. Gandhi and the lawyers collected depositions by about ten thousand peasants. Notes were made on other evidence. Documents were collected. The whole area throbbed with the activities of the investigators and forceful protests of landlords. The lieutenant governor summoned Gandhi. After four protracted interviews an official commission of inquiry was appointed to look into the indigo sharecroppers' condition. Gandhi was the sole representative of the peasants. The official inquiry assembled huge quantity of evidence against the big planters. They agreed, in principle, to make refunds to the peasants. After consultation, a settlement of 25 per cent refund to the farmers was agreed on. This was a moral victory of the peasants. They recognised their rights and learned courage.

Within a few years the British planters gave up their estates. These now went back to the peasants. They became the masters of land. Thus, indigo sharecropping disappeared.

Q4. How did Gandhi work for rural uplift during his stay in Champaran?

Ans: Gandhi wanted to do something to remove the cultural and social backwardness in Champaran villages. He appealed for teachers. Two young disciples of Gandhi, Mahadev Desai and Narhari Parikh and their wives volunteered themselves for work. Several others responded from distant parts of the country. Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi and Devdas, Gandhi's youngest son, arrived from the Ashram. Primary schools were opened in six villages. Kasturba taught the ashram rules on personal cleanliness and community cleanliness. She also talked to women about their filthy clothes. Health conditions were miserable. Gandhi got a doctor to volunteer his services for six months. Only three medicines were available: Castor oil, quinine and sulphur ointment. Anyone who showed a coated tongue was given a dose of castor oil; anybody with malaria fever received quinine plus castor oil; anybody with skin eruptions received ointment plus castor oil.

Thus, Gandhi never contented himself with large political or economic solutions. He worked for total uplift of villages and the poor sections of the society.

Q5. 'Self-reliance, Indian independence and help to sharecroppers were all bound together.' Elucidate on the basis of reading 'Indigo' by Louis Fischer.

OR

'The Champaran episode was a turning-point in Gandhi's life.

Explain with examples from 'Indigo' by Louis Fischer.

Ans: Gandhi stayed in Champaran for a long time. The Champaran episode was a turning point in his life. It was during this struggle in 1917 that he decided to urge the departure of the British.

Champaran episode did not begin as an act of defiance. It grew out of an attempt to make the sufferings of large numbers of poor peasants less severe. Gandhi concentrated on their practical day to day problems. He analysed the root cause of the problem-fear, and tried to eradicate it. The voluntary demonstration of the poor peasants against the government for putting Gandhi in trouble was the beginning of the end of their fear of the British.

In everything Gandhi did, he tried to mould a new free Indian who

could stand on his own feet and thus make India free. He taught his lawyer friends a lesson in self-reliance by opposing the involvement of C.F. Andrews, an Englishman in their unequal fight. His help would be a prop. This would reflect their weakness. Their cause was just and they must rely on themselves to win the battle. Thus self-reliance, Indian independence and help to sharecroppers were all bound together.

Q6. Justify the appropriateness of the title 'Indigo' to this extract.

Ans: The title 'Indigo' is quite appropriate, to the point and suggestive. It at once focuses our attention on the central issue-the exploitation of the indigo sharecropper peasants at the hands of cruel British planters. They compelled them through a long term agreement to raise indigo on 15 per cent of their landholding and surrender the entire indigo harvest as rent.

After the development of synthetic indigo by Germany, the British planters extracted money from the peasants as compensation for being released from the 15 per cent agreement. The peasants who wanted their money back had filed civil suits. The planters who behaved as lords above the law and were dreaded by the poor were obliged to surrender part of money and with it part of their prestige.

The extract also points out the work done by Gandhi and his associates to improve the economic, political, cultural and social life of the indigo sharecroppers. Their education, health and hygiene also received due attention. The plight of indigo sharecroppers, then- struggle under Gandhi's leadership and ultimate victory when Indigo sharecropping disappeared from important landmarks. Thus, the title 'Indigo' is highly suggestive and apt.

Q7. What impression do you form about Gandhi on reading the chapter 'Indigo' ?

Ans: The chapter 'Indigo' pays a tribute to the leadership shown by Mahatma Gandhi to secure justice for oppressed people through convincing argumentation and negotiation. Gandhi had a magnetic attraction and great persuasive power. He could draw people of all classes to himself and make them partners in the freedom movement. Even ordinary people were inspired to make contribution to the freedom movement.

Gandhi emerges as a champion of the downtrodden and the oppressed. Rural uplift was his favourite programme. His knowledge of legal procedure and respect for law is also highlighted. He does not want to be a lawbreaker. At the same time he wants to render the humanitarian and national service in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience. He also appears as a polite and friendly person. Gandhi's ability to read the minds of others made them speechless. He believed in self-reliance, just cause and purity of means to achieve India's Independence.

Q8. Why is the Champaran episode considered to be the beginning of the Indian struggle for Independence? [All India 2014]

Ans: The Champaran episode began as an attempt to ease the sufferings of a large number of 'peasants. He got spontaneous support of thousands of people. Gandhi declared that the British could not order him about in his own country. Under his leadership, the peasants became aware of their rights. Raj Kumar Shukla, a farmer of Champaran helped him a lot in bringing about the change. Other peasants too fought courageously and contributed in their own way to the movement. It resulted in their winning the battle of Champaran. The effects of Gandhi's method of non-violence and non-cooperation proved very fruitful in this movement. Hence, it can be said that the Champaran episode is the beginning of the Indian struggle for independence.

