

## Champanan: Probationary Internship of Future Gandhi

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### Abstract

Gandhi plays an important role in freedom movement. He started Champanan Satyagraha for the freedom of the nation. He arrived Champanan on 10 April 1917 and took rest at the house of Sant Raut in Amolwa Village with a group of eminent lawyers. He observed the situation of the locality and launched satyagraha.

**Key Words:** Champanan, Freedom, Farmer, Struggle, Victory

Mahatma Gandhi himself admitted and shared with Louis Fischer in 1947, the importance of Champanan Satyagraha. He said,

“I will tell you how it happened that I decided, to urge the departure of the British. It was in 1917.”<sup>1</sup>

When Raj Kumar Shukla approached him for a visit to Champanan, the place was alien to his topographical knowledge. But the utmost sincerity in consistency and stand fast persuasion finally moved Gandhi to undertake a visit to a place, Gandhi has not heard of it.<sup>2</sup>

Although Raj Kumar Shukla was resolute, Gandhi was aware that he was not articulate enough to impart detailed information about the prevailing conditions in and around Champanan, he was scheduled to visit. Hence, Gandhiji decided to first visit Muzaffarpur, which was in way to Champanan to gather relevant information.

So, the most noteworthy place of North Bihar, Muzaffarpur acquired historical importance as vital centre of intellectual deliberation.

The credit for Gandhi’s visit at Muzaffarpur goes to Professor of History J.B. Kripalani of the G.B.B. College, (Later rechristened as L.S. College) whom Gandhi had seen at Shantiniketan of Tagore.

On arrival at Muzaffarpur railway station Gandhi was warmly received by Kripalani along with host of inmates of college hostel of which he was Superintendent.

Another distinguished Professor Malkani of the erstwhile GBB College, was host for two days in the college campus. Overwhelmed by Malkani’s hospitality Gandhi observed:

“It was an extraordinary thing in those days for a government Professor to harbour a man like me”.<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi meeting with British Officials at his own initiative proved an eye opener.

He was bluntly treated as an outsider by the secretary of the British Landlord (Planters) association which was politely but firmly refuted. Even the Tirhut Commissioner bullied him to be an unwelcome guest and ordained to leave Tirhut and once again Gandhi refused to oblige. On both occasions, Gandhi sticking to his ground proved to be a turning point vis-à-vis his futuristic firm campaign for swaraj in the days to come.

Seeds of Civil Disobedience (1930) were firmly planted in his refusal to obey orders of British officials in Champaran on unethical grounds. Throughout his defiance of arbitrary British Commands, he remained polite and friendly but very firm in his resolution.

Louis Fisher, his acclaimed American biographer has state,

“He was giving them (British) concrete proof that their might hitherto dreaded and unquestioned, could be challenged by Indians”.<sup>4</sup>

The India, events in Champaran provided the first opportunity for mass mobilization which had no parallel earlier. Ground reality in Champaran were more challenging because the peasants were ignorant and had no knowledge about Gandhi as a person or a leader. All they knew that a ‘Masiha’ has come to mitigate their miseries.

As a matter of strategy, Gandhi was fully avoided tagging Congress with Champaran mission as the Congress was soft towards the Government. Further, the rayyats of Champaran has no idea about the world outside the region. However, their

undiluted love and respect for Gandhi was so immense that Gandhi was overwhelmed by their humility, simplicity and extraordinary faith that they responded in Gandhi.

“In meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth.”<sup>5</sup>

It is apt to add that Gandhi’s unshakable faith in the people at large continued to be lifelong governing principles. This was indelible legacy of Champaran to Gandhian thought.

Although, he went non-compliance what he deemed in comparable with hisconscience, he remained non-offensive while offering civil resistance to their orders.

The fact was that the motivated case against him was withdrawn. A commission on enquiry was constituted and the case was withdrawn against him made him surer about the efficacy of his campaign in Champaran. He himself has recorded in his autobiography,

“The Champaran struggle was a proof of the fact that, disinterested service of the people in any sphere ultimately helps the country politically.”<sup>6</sup>

Buoyant by the success of Champaran Satyagrah, Gandhi was now resolved to carry the spirit of the same to its logical end by applying broad principles of peaceful civil resistance based on effective teamwork and people’s participation in National perspective.

**References:**

1. The Life of Mahatma Gandhi-Louis Fischer Happer Colophon Books.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, p. 149.
4. Ibid, p. 151.
5. The story of My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography of MK Gandhi), p. 385
6. Ibid, p. 388