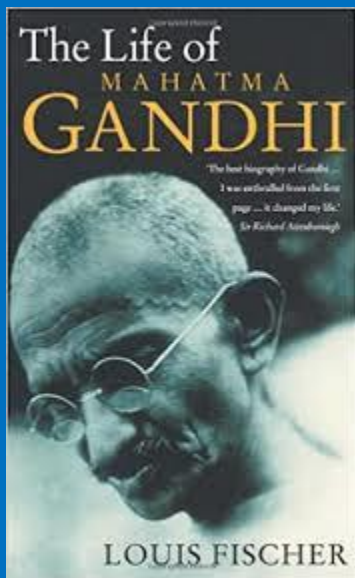


INDIGO



Louis Fischer
(1896-1970)

Louis Fischer was born in Philadelphia. He served as a volunteer in the British Army between 1918 and 1920. Fischer made a career as a journalist and wrote for *The New York Times*, *The Saturday Review* and for European and Asian publications. He was also a member of the faculty at Princeton University. The following is an excerpt from his book- *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. *The book has been reviewed as one of the best books ever written on Gandhi by Times Educational Supplement.*

INDIGO

Louis Fischer
(1896-1970)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Developing skills of writing a biographical account—third person
- Developing communication skills
- Enhancing vocabulary
- Appreciation of values viz. determination, hard work, dedication
- Developing leadership qualities

Skills –

Diction-third person narration, sentence structure, device, use of tense and narration (direct and indirect), expressions, lucidity

INDIGO

Louis Fischer
(1896-1970)

PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

- Why is Gandhiji's birthday observed as the International Day of Non-Violence?
- Do you have any idea about Civil Disobedience Movement?
- When/Where did it begin?
- How did it happen?
- What is indigo?

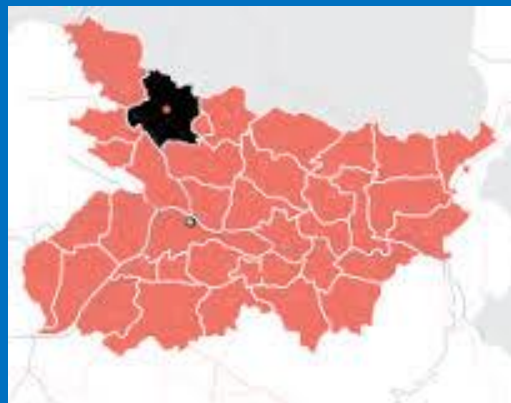
INDIGO

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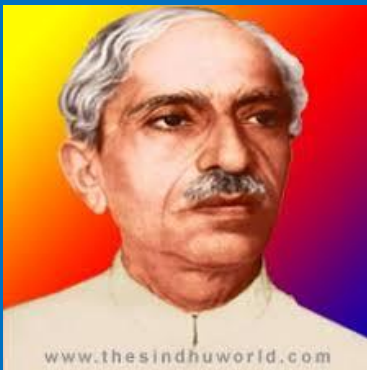
INTRODUCTION

The account is based on the interview taken by Louis Fischer of Mahatma Gandhi. In order 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 in order to safeguard sharecroppers from the atrocities of landlords. "Indigo" portrays Gandhiji's struggle for the poor peasants of Champaran. He managed to get justice after a yearlong battle for the peasants. He also made arrangements for the education, health and hygiene for the families of the poor peasants. He gave them the lesson of self-reliance.

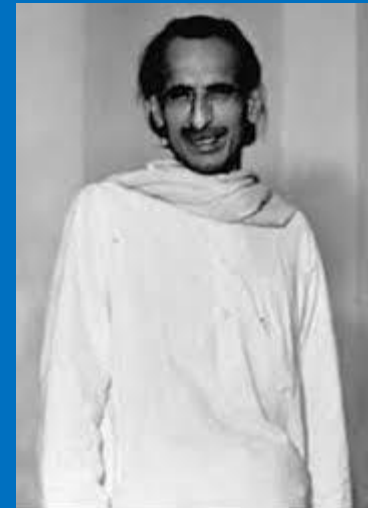
Down the memory lane...



Down the memory lane...



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J. B. Kripalani - Founder of
Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party

INDIGO

Louis Fischer
(1896-1970)

Theme – The leadership shown by Mahatma Gandhi to secure justice for oppressed people through convincing argumentation and negotiation.

Sub-Theme – Contributions made by anonymous Indians to the freedom movement.

Plot – Shukla's meeting with Gandhi-Problems of the sharecroppers-Gandhi's visit to Champaran en route Muzzafarpur-Patna episode-Motihari episode -Tirhut episode – Court episode- attitude of lawyers- meeting with Lt Governor-Investigation-settlement of dispute- social upliftment-lessons on self-reliance

INDIGO

Louis Fischer
(1896-1970)

CHARACTER –

- Gandhi
- Raj Kumar Shukla
- Rajendra Prasad
- Lawyers
- Prof Kripalini
- Malkani
- Servants of Rajendra
- A maltreated farmer
- Peasants
- Kasturbai Gandhi
- Other volunteers
- CF Andrews
- British Officials



INDIGO

Louis Fischer
(1896-1970)

Key points through Explanation Method

- Exploitation of the peasants of Champaran by British landlord
- Raj Kumar Shukla- A poor sharecropper from Champaran wishing to meet Gandhiji.
- Raj Kumar Shukla- an illiterate but resolute (determined) hence followed Gandhiji to Lucknow, Kanpur, Ahmadabad
- Gandhi impressed by Shukla's tenacity
- Received Gandhi in Calcutta
- Gandhi's visit to Champaran
- His halt at Muzzafarfar and criticism of the lawyers
- Freedom from fear is more important than legal justice in India
- The episode at Patna

INDIGO

Louis Fischer
(1896-1970)

Key points through Explanation Method

- Sent telegram to J B Kripalani and stayed in Prof. Malkani's home - a government servant.
- Indians afraid to show sympathy to the supporters of home rule.
- The news of Gandhi's arrival spread- sharecroppers gathered in large number to meet their champion.
- 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.
- Germany had developed synthetic indigo –British landlords freed the Indian farmers from the 15% arrangement but asked them to pay compensation.

INDIGO

Key points through Explanation Method

- Many signed, some resisted, engaged lawyers, landlords hired thugs.
- Gandhiji went to the British Official Commissioner who asked him to leave Tirhut, Gandhiji disobeyed
- Court Episode
- Indians learned courage
- The victory of civil disobedience
- Role of the lawyers led by Rajendra Prasad
- Meeting with the Lieutenant Governor
- Enquiry commission
- The compromise by the landlords
- Settlement of the dispute
- The social cause
- Role of C F Andrews
- A lesson on self-reliance

INDIGO

SUMMARY

Louis Fischer met Gandhi in 1942 at his ashram in Sevagram. Gandhi told him that how he initiated the departure of the British from India. He recalled that it in 1917 at the request of Rajkumar Shukla, a sharecropper from Champaran, he visited the place. Gandhi had gone to Lucknow to attend the annual meeting of Indian National Congress in the year 1916. Shukla told him that he had come from Champaran to seek his help in order to safeguard the interests of the sharecroppers. Gandhi told him that he was busy so Shukla accompanied him to various places till he consented to visit Champaran. His firm decision impressed Gandhiji and he promised him that he would visit Calcutta at a particular date and then Shukla could come and take him along to Champaran. Shukla met him at Calcutta and they took a train to Patna. Gandhi went to lawyer Rajendra Prasad's house and

INDIGO

SUMMARY

they waited for him. In order to grab complete knowledge of the situation, he reached Muzzafarpur on 15th April 1917. He was welcomed by Prof. J.B Kripalani and his students. Gandhi was surprised to see the immense support for an advocate of home rule like him. He also met some lawyers who were already handling cases of sharecroppers. As per the contract, 15 percent of the peasant's land holding was to be reserved for cultivation of indigo, the crop of which was given to the landlord as rent. This system was very oppressive. Gandhi also refers to a shameful episode he encountered in the house of Rajendra Prasad in Patna. He condemns the act of untouchability as he was not allowed to draw water from a well as he looked like another yeoman. Gandhi wanted to help the sharecroppers. So he visited the British landlord association but he was not given any information because he was an outsider.

INDIGO

SUMMARY

He then went to the commissioner of Tirhut division who threatened Gandhi and ask him to leave Tirhut. Instead of returning, he went to Motihari. Here he started gathering complete information about the indigo contract. He was accompanied by many lawyers. One day as he was on his way to meet a peasant, who was maltreated by the indigo planters, he was stopped by the police superintendent's messenger who served him a notice asking him to leave. Gandhi received the notice but disobeyed the order. Since Gandhi disobeyed the order, a case was filed against him. On the day of trial, a large crowd gathered near the court. It became impossible to handle them. Gandhi helped the officers to control the crowd. Gandhi gave his statement that he was not a lawbreaker but he disobeyed so that he could help the peasants. He was granted bail and later on, the case against him was dropped.

INDIGO

SUMMARY

Then Gandhi planned his future action. Many lawyers came to advise him but when he stressed, they all joined his struggle and even consented to go to jail in order to help the poor peasants. He had a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor. Finally a commission was set to carry out an investigation. The British landlords could perceive its outcome and therefore, agreed to a settlement outside the court. Gandhiji agreed to 25% refund by the landowners, it symbolized the surrender of the prestige. After the inquiry was conducted, the planters were found guilty and were asked to pay back to the peasants. Expecting refusal, they offered to pay only 25 percent of the amount. Gandhi accepted this too because he wanted to free the sharecroppers from the binding of the indigo contract. Gandhi did not leave after the battle was won.

INDIGO

SUMMARY

He opened six schools in Champaran villages and volunteers like Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh, and his son, Devdas taught them. Kasturbai, the wife of Gandhi used to teach personal hygiene. Later on, with the help of a volunteer doctor he provided medical facility to the natives of Champaran, thus making their life a bit better. A peace maker, Andrews wanted to volunteer at Champaran ashram. But Gandhi refused as he wanted Indians to learn the lesson of self reliance so that they would not depend on others.

INDIGO

QUESTIONS

- Who is Rajkumar Shukla?
- What did he do when Gandhiji could not give him a date?
- Why was Gandhi impressed with Rajkumar Shukla's tenacity and determination?
- What was the problem faced by the sharecroppers?
- Why did Gandhi decide to visit Muzzafarpur before going to Champaran?
- Why did he chide the lawyers at Muzzafarpur?
- How was Gandhi received by the people?
- What was the attitude of the average Indian in smaller localities towards the advocates of home rule?
- Mention the contribution of the ordinary masses in the Champaran episode.

INDIGO

QUESTIONS

- “Freedom from fear is more important than legal justice in India.”
Elucidate.
- Why was Gandhi not allowed draw water from the well?
- What did the peasants pay the British landlords as rent? What did the landlords now want instead and why?
- How were the peasant exploited by the landlords?
- How was Gandi treated when he visited the office of British official at Tirhut?
- Why was Gandhi not allowed to proceed to Motihari?
- What did he do in turn?
- Why did Gandhi agree to a settlement of only 25 percent refund to the peasants?
- How was the Champaran episode a turning point in Gandhi’s life?

INDIGO

QUESTIONS

- How did Gandhi help resolve the dispute between the peasants and the British landlords?
- What did the lawyers initially say when they met Gandhi?
- What did they think later on?
- Why was Gandhi opposed to the idea of enlisting the assistance of Charles Freer Andrews?
- Why did Gandhi stay back in Champaran?
- Mention the service he rendered after his stay in Chamaparan.
- 'Indigo' by Louis Fischer speaks the leadership qualities displayed by Gandhi in his fight for the rights of the poor sharecroppers of Champaran. Discuss.
- Convincing argumentation and negotiation were the key strength of the strategy employed by Gandhi in supporting the cause of the sharecroppers. Discuss.

INDIGO

QUESTIONS

- What measures did Gandhi take to improve the cultural and social backwardness of the villages of Champaran?
- Why does the poet say that a thing of beauty is a joy forever?
- What is the impact of beauty on us?
- Why do we wreath a flowery band?
- How does beauty keep us healthier?