

## **A study of the legacy of Champaran Satyagrah in Contemporary India**



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Session: 2015-16

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## Abstract

Gandhi initially travelled for a year to get to know India before arriving from South Africa in 1915. He became involved in the issues the Champaran peasants had with the English planters for whom they grew the indigo plant at the conclusion of that time. Historiography has unequivocally proved that his actions in Champaran served as his first instance of the satyagraha's effectiveness, catapulting him to national notoriety. As a result, the study of Gandhi's work as a political theorist, freedom warrior, and social reformer now includes the Champaran conflict as a subset of the greater Gandhian literature. This article adopts an alternative viewpoint. Gandhi had practised a number of methods for managing and carrying out a satyagraha campaign in addition to establishing his idea of satyagraha in South Africa. Champaran observes him using such strategies methodically, which is extremely unlike from how peasant conflicts were fought. In an effort to apply a management perspective to his execution of this endeavour, I characterise the Champaran fight as a project. I start by giving a quick summary of the peasant conflict in Champaran. The strategies Gandhi used to carry out his leadership of the movement are then examined from the viewpoint of project management. I demonstrate that it is easier to comprehend Gandhi's philosophy and morals when they are kept apart from the tactics used to carry out the conflict. I argue in my conclusion that Gandhi used certain logical and methodical project management techniques that guaranteed the victory of the battle, which were ingrained in the larger satyagraha concept.

**Keywords:** Champaran Satyagrah, Nations, Gandhi's philosophy, project management

### 1. Introduction

The western world began looking for methods to boost national prosperity after the Renaissance. Bullions were formerly thought to be one of the main ways to improve a country's wealth. The concept of mercantilism was later created via trade and commerce through commercial activities. Industrial output has undergone a revolution thanks to the steam engine. Early multinational corporations, such as the English East India Company, Dutch East India Company, and others, were founded as a result of the desire for inexpensive industrial products.

Increased demand for industrial goods on the western market as a result of the industrial revolution also increased rivalry amongst businesses. Companies faced two significant obstacles: first, locating inexpensive raw materials; and, second, obtaining a wider market to sell industrial product at high margins in order to enhance profits. The colour blue tells the tale of how peasants were taken advantage of under the British Raj. Between the 16th and 20th centuries, the need for natural dye on the European market increased, attracting European commercial enterprises to produce, cultivate, and sell indigo from India to other locations. Planters were able to enact a number of harsh rules with the aid of zamindars and the government in an effort to reduce costs. The development of synthetic indigo had increased the load on the peasants, further escalating their plight. Gandhiji travelled to Champaran at Raj Kumar Sukul's request and used his first Satyagraha on Indian soil to end the cruel Tein Kathiha legislation by enforcing the Champaran Agrarian Law. A brutally exploitative framework was created in India as a result of the commerce and manufacture of indigo.

### **Objectives of the study**

- 1) To Study of The Legacy Of Champaran Satyagrah In Contemporary in India.

### **2. The Champaran Struggle**

Amid north Bihar, in the foothills of the Himalayas, sits the district of Champaran. For the purpose of controlling and generating money, many zamindaris<sup>1</sup>, including Bettiah, Ramnagar, and Madhuban, were established in the region about 1790. Indians who had been residing there from far earlier periods signed the original lease on the plots. By 1911, over 88 percent of the estates had gradually been acquired by Europeans (Pouchepadass, 1999), who encouraged the development of indigo and sugar cane and set up facilities for its processing. Due to larger profit margins, indigo eventually took the role of sugar cane. Zeraif, or cultivation by the landowner directly, with tenants required labouring on these fields or providing their oxen for a charge, and asamiwar, or cultivation by tenants, were the two main forms of agriculture used in the region. The predominant technique used under the asamiwar system, which covered around three-quarters of the area, was known as the "tinkathia." The tenant was required to cultivate indigo on three kathas<sup>2</sup> (thus the name tin kathia) of each bigha<sup>3</sup> (about 15% of the land) under this arrangement. Written agreements that may last 20 to 30 years were made. The renter would get a predetermined fee per bigha if the crop was successful. A bad harvest would

result in a lower price. The renter was obligated to pay significant penalties if he failed to cultivate indigo (Prasad, 1928). A Commission was established by the government to look into the issue after an uprising concerning indigo farming and the hardships of the farmers occurred in Bengal between 1859 and 1860. The Commission ruled that despite having access to more lucrative options, the farmers were compelled to cultivate the crop. Indigo prices were unpredictable, and factory owners often physically attacked farmers. The majority of the complaints were deemed to be valid, and remedy for the farmers was advised, including greater discretion over how much to produce and how to pay for it. These suggestions, nevertheless, only applied to Bengal. In response, indigo growers relocated to Bihar.

Farmers in Bihar have been opposing different features of the indigo growing method since the 1860s. The Bihar Planters Association was founded in 1877 as a result of the changes carried out in Bengal, which served as a warning. The Association made choices including increasing the price of indigo and limiting coercive behaviours. However, many planters disobeyed since organisation membership was optional and its rulings could not be enforced. In facilities that are often near to the farms, indigo colour is taken from the plant's leaves and turned into cakes. The industry was going through a period of turmoil starting in the late 19th century. The demand for natural indigo decreased and the price fell once a synthetic dye was created in Germany in 1897 at a considerably cheaper cost. The growers wanted to minimise expenses. However, the effects of World War I (WWI) on German supply caused resurgence in the desire for natural indigo. Profits from indigo were substantial. The returns for a successful and unsuccessful year varied from 25% to 100%. (Pouchepadass, 1999). The price of other crops had increased due to a scarcity of food grains, making planting indigo a poor alternative for farmers. When the tenants refused to cultivate indigo, the planters increased their rent (known as sarabeshi) by a percentage ranging from 50% to 70% and forced the tenants to sign agreements to that effect. The planters started looking for other methods of increasing income besides hiking rents. Among them were abwabs (or illegal charges). For instance, fees for water supply, a cess that the farmer was required to pay upon a family marriage, the birth of a child, or even on receiving property as an inheritance. Some planters even imposed fees to cover the expense of their family's vacation. The finest areas of the land for producing indigo were often appropriated by the planters, affecting the farmers' ability to produce other crops. Additionally,

amlas, or the planters' agents and workers, would request a commission (known as dasturi) from farmers as well as manual labourers who worked in factories at the time of payment.

### 3. Indigo farming in India and Tirhut

The indigo (Neel) plant yields the blue dye known as indigo. First for the East India Company, then for the British Raj, it was cultivated in India. It was one of the most lucrative commodities sold in the European market throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, it was also known as "Blue Gold." Indigo was cultivated all throughout India during the nineteenth century. The three main districts of Bihar's Tirhut area produced some of the best indigo. A total of £50,000 in money was spent, and over 3,70,000 acres of land were farmed. A total of 15,000 locals from the area and 700 English men handled the production (McDonald, M.N, p. 387). In Bengal and Bihar, production of indigo significantly increased in the 18th and 19th centuries. According to Table 1, indigo output climbed from 62,500 maunds in 1795–1796 to 1, 21,000 maunds in 1831–1832. Indigo planting area in India has increased as a result of the enormous demand for native indigo in the European market. Any commercial organisation must first acquire inexpensive raw materials, as was covered in the previous part, and then find a wider market to sell industrial product at high margins in order to enhance profits. The same difficulties faced indigo planters. The permanent land settlement system (Zamindari system) allowed English businessmen to reduce their production costs from a cost standpoint. One of the main justifications for selling natural indigo at cheaper costs to gain larger market shares and greater overall profits was its low cost. The English Indigo Company's greatest benefit in creating fierce rivalry in the indigo business was the colonisation of India.

Table 1: Between 1795 and 1832, indigo was grown in Bengal and neighbouring areas.

Years	Maunds	Years	Maunds	Years	Maunds
1795-96	62500	1808-09	94539	1821-22	92848
1796-97	32300	1809-10	43012	1822-23	112606
1797-98	54600	1810-11	73407	1823*24	80315
1798-99	23800	1811-12	69654	1824-25	110227
1799-1800	35540	1812-13	73883	1825-26	156548
1800-01	39900	1813-14	74585	1826-27	79678
1801-02	38500	1814-15	102662	1827-28	151699
1802-03	29800	1815-16	114481	1828-29	98009
1803-04	54048	1816-17	83000	1829-30	132946
1804-05	64803	1817-18	72000	1830-31	129117
1805-06	85380	1818-19	75000	1831-32	121000
1807-07	51244	1819-20	106843		
1807-08	103950	1820-21	76254		

The finest natural indigo in vast quantities was shipped from Tirhut to different countries throughout the globe. Geographical factors and the pattern of land settlement have encouraged indigo producers to congregate in this area. The four principal indigo tracts of the Tirhut area were Champaran, Saran, Muzzafarpur, and Darbhanga. The soil and climate in this area were ideal for growing indigo of the highest grade naturally. The majority of the indigo traded from this area came from Calcutta.

#### 4. The Business Question of Natural vs Synthetic Indigo

The western indigo industry's ongoing research and development led to synthetic indigo. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the industry entered the market. Utilizing hydrocarbons from coal tar, synthetic indigo was created. English and French manufacturers dominated the sector until the third quarter of the 19th century. German manufacturers dominated the sector later in 1870. Due to competition from makers of synthetic German indigo, natural indigo prices reached an all-time low in the first decade of the 20th century. However, many planters continued to work in the industry and made an attempt to lower the cost of natural indigo. The Bihar Indigo Planters' Association later discovered that it is exceedingly difficult to lower the price of natural indigo. In his 1904 budget address, Sir Edward Law, a financial member of the Governor General Council, promised a sustained effort to bring down costs in the natural indigo sector. He recommended lowering the cost of the indigo planters. The strain on planters and zamindars increased as a result, but they were able to transfer the burden on farmers. It was

exceedingly difficult for the English company that sold natural indigo to remain competitive in the market.

### **5. Socio-economic and Political impact of Satyagraha**

The planters in India's Tirhut area grew indigo as a result of market factors in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Planters exploited peasants using a permanent land settlement system and other coercive techniques in order to maintain a large profit margin. The Teen Kathiya system was abolished on May 1st, 1918, thanks to Gandhiji's Satyagraha and the Champaran Agrarian Law of the Governor General of India. Gandhiji later began rudimentary schools to educate the local people. The Gandhiji movement increased awareness, which in turn increased locals' sense of nationalism. The goal of Satyagraha was to reduce the growing financial and racial disparities that existed in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Champaran Satyagraha was Gandhiji's first attempt at a nonviolent campaign, which eventually came to be associated with the freedom fighters and provided direction for the Indian national independence struggle. Following the success of the Champaran Satyagraha, the general public became aware of the significance of Satyagraha and other non-violent options for achieving independence. After the Satyagraha, people began to understand its importance, and Gandhiji assumed control of politics. He rose to prominence in the Congress and the Indian independence struggle.

### **6. Conclusion**

Prior to independence, multinational corporations created exploitative structures via the free market business method of indigo production and trading by forming alliances with indigenous people. The primary cause of the farmers' concern was the collapse in the price of natural indigo on the European market. Gandhiji gave leadership to the Indigo peasants and Champaran agrarian crisis, which finally resulted into abolition of such practices by social and political movements. Farmers in India who grow cotton and other commercial commodities confront the same issue in the present global environment. The WTO accord allowed for global access to the Indian market. In the global market, the terms of trade for Indian farmers have become worse as a result of globalisation. A political and social leadership is also necessary to address the agricultural and agrarian hardship in India. The lessons from Champaran Satyagraha and Gandhi's ideology should be used.



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