5.Indigo (Flamingo)

Gandhiji served as a lawyer in South Africa for twenty years. He heard he was needed in India, and in 1916, he was in Lucknow attending a National Convention of the Congress party. A poor peasant Raj Kumar Shukla was waiting for him. He requested Gandhiji to go with him to Champaran in Bihar to solve the indigo problem .He followed Gandhiji from town to town----Lucknow to Kanpur. Then Gandhiji returned to his ashram in Ahmedabad.

From Calcutta they went to Patna. Shukla led him to the house of Rajendra Prasad who later became the president of free India---he was not there, but Gandhiji was treated as an untouchable and not permitted to touch the well.

The Indigo problem:

The Britishers were the landlords and the farmers followed their orders. They had to grow indigo on 15% of the land and give the tax to the Britishers. Later German indigo proved to be better and Indians did not produce indigo.

Even then, they were compelled to pay the tax.

Gandhiji accompanied Shukla first to Muzzaffarpur.

There Gandhiji met Professor Kriplani, a govt school teacher. Gandhiji consulted the lawyers of Muzaffarpur and got some details of the indigo problem.

Gandhiji scolded the lawyers for charging a large fee from the poor farmers.

Now in Champaran approached the secretary of the Landlords association about the problem. He refused.

Then he approached the British commissioner who advised Gandhiji to go back from the division.

He refused, and went to Motihari, the capital accompanied by lawyers. A poor farmer was illtreated, and Gandhiji sat on an elephant-back and proceeded to help him, but he was ordered to go back.

He was given a notice to quit champaran but he refused.

He was summoned to the court the next day.

Ten thousand farmers gave their depositions. Gandhiji requested Rajendra Prasad to come with his lawyers to help him.

Motihari was full of thousands of Indians. The Britishers were baffled.

Rajendra Prasad and his friends said that if Gandhiji was jailed they would become helpless. So Gandhiji said what about the poor peasants? They realised their mistake. The case was dropped. Civil disobedience had won.

Then Gandhiji with the help of the lawyers studied all the cases. He was let free. Gandhiji had long interviews with the Lieutenant Governor who ordered an efficient inquiry into the problem of the sharecroppers.

Gandhiji was the sole representative of the farmers. He stayed in Champaran for one year.

The Britishers were told to refund the Indigo tax. They could not, so Gandhiji told them to return half. In the end, they returned ¼ of the money they had taken; and the indigo problem was settled in principles.

He refused the help of Charles Freer Andrews to solve his problems as he was sure he could face the Britishers alone.

Thereafter no indigo was produced and no tax was levied.

Word Meaning

1.faculty teaching staff

2.volunteer to offer to do the job

3.excerpt part of

4.urge request with pressure

5.resolute determined

6.emaciated very weak

7.tenacity to keep a firm hold

8.advent coming

9.chided scolded

10.irksome troublesome

11.maltreated treated badly

12.multitude big crowd

13.complied agreed

14.spontaneous at once; immediate

15.penalty fine

16. liberation freedom

17.baffled puzzled

18.humanetarian for the welfare of other people

19.bail money to be given to be set free

20.conferred advice taken

21.deposition statement to be used as evidence

22.grievance complaint

23.vehement forceful

24. evidence proof

25.protracted long

26.filthy dirty

27.unanimously all agreed

28.abandoned gave up

29.abstraction a concept

30.allieviate reduce

31. pacifist peace maker