

Long-Answer Questions

Q.1. The Champaran episode was a turning point in Gandhiji's life. Elucidate.

[CBSE (AI) 2013]

Ans. Before the Champaran episode, Gandhiji was not aware of the reality of the peasants of his motherland. On the insistence of Rajkumar Shukla, a share cropper, Gandhiji went to Champaran and saw the miserable condition of the poor illiterate farmers. It was an eye-opener for him. The Britishers exploited the farmers to grow indigo. When it was not needed, they had to render compensation in order to be freed from old agreement. Gandhiji was shocked to see them going to the court. He gathered them. This was the first step to free them from their fear of the British. The officials felt powerless without Gandhiji's co-operation. He made them realise that the power of the British could be challenged by Indians.

The peasants were made to realise they too had rights. The British landlords left the estate to the peasants and returned to their land after some time, thus ending indigo share cropping. Through the Champaran episode, he made it clear to the British that they could not order Indians in their own country and through his personal example taught masses to be self-reliant and motivated them into civil disobedience.

Q.2. Why did Rajkumar Shukla invite Gandhiji to Champaran? How did Gandhiji solve the problem of the indigo farmers?

[CBSE (AI) 2013]

OR

Why did Gandhiji consider freedom from fear more important than legal justice for the poor peasants of Champaran?

[CBSE Sample Paper 2016]

Ans. Rajkumar Shukla was a poor peasant from Champaran. Under an old agreement, the peasants were compelled by the British to grow indigo on 15% of their land and part with it as rent. For this, Rajkumar Shukla had been advised to speak to Gandhiji who he was told, would be able to do something about their problem.

The landlords had learned that Germany had developed synthetic indigo. They forced the sharecroppers to sign agreements to pay them compensation to be freed from the 15 per cent arrangement. The sharecroppers, who refused, engaged lawyers. The information about synthetic indigo reached the peasants who had signed the agreements. They wanted their money back.

Gandhiji organised a gathering of the peasants at Motihari around the court. This was the beginning of their liberation from fear of the British. Though Gandhiji co-operated with the British and regulated the crowd, but it was a clear proof that their might could be challenged. He inspired the lawyers to fight for justice for the sharecroppers.

After the inquiry committee's report, the peasants expected the entire sum of money as refund, but Gandhiji asked for 50% only. He was offered a refund of 25%. Gandhiji accepted it.

According to Gandhiji, at that stage, money was less important. The landlords had to surrender their prestige and the peasants realised that they too had rights. This was their first lesson in courage. This is how their problem was solved.

Q.3. Which factors helped the fear-stricken peasants of Champaran to achieve freedom?

[CBSE (F) 2010]

Ans. There were several factors in which Gandhiji's contribution was remarkable.

The peasants were sharecroppers with the British planters. According to an old agreement, the peasants had to produce indigo on 15 per cent of the land and give it as rent to the landlords. Around 1917, it was told that Germany had developed synthetic indigo. So the British planters now no longer desired the indigo crop. To release the peasants from the old agreement, they demanded compensation from them. Most of the illiterate peasants agreed to it. However, others refused. Lawyers were engaged to go to the court. At that time, Gandhiji appeared in Champaran. He fought a long battle for the poor peasants for one year and managed to get justice for them. The peasants now became courageous and became aware about their rights. Along with the political and economic struggle, Gandhiji worked on the social level also. He made arrangements for the education, health and hygiene of the families of poor peasants by teaching the lesson of self-reliance. It was one of the ways to forward the struggle for Indian independence.

The peasants now had courage. They believed that they had rights which they could defend. Gradually, the British planters left their estates. These estates now came back to the peasants. Indigo sharecropping disappeared for all times to come.

Q.4. Give an account of Gandhiji's efforts to secure justice for the poor indigo sharecroppers of Champaran.

[CBSE (AI) 2012]

Ans. Gandhiji 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 commissioner of Tirhut were non-cooperative. Lawyers from Muzaffarpur briefed him about the court cases of these peasants.

Gandhiji and the lawyers collected depositions by about ten thousand peasants. Notes were made on other evidences. Documents were collected. The whole area throbbed with the activities of the investigators and forceful protests of landlords.

The lieutenant governor summoned Gandhiji. After four protracted interviews, an official commission of enquiry was appointed to look into the indigo sharecroppers' situation. Gandhiji was the sole representative of the peasants. The official enquiry assembled huge quantity of evidence against the big planters. They agreed in principle to make refunds to the peasants. After consolation, a settlement of 25 per cent refund to the farmers was agreed upon. This was a moral victory for the peasants. They recognised their rights and became courageous. Within a few years, the British planters gave up their estates. These now went back to the peasants. They became the master of the land. Thus, indigo sharecropping disappeared.

Q.5. How was the Champaran episode a big success. Elucidate.

Ans. The fight and the success of Champaran was the success of Civil Disobedience movement started by Gandhiji. It was the attempt of the poor peasants who were helpless to the fraud met out to them. One of them contacted Gandhiji. Gandhiji's presence in Bihar raised a huge row in Champaran. Thousands of peasants held a demonstration to protest against the government. The government was baffled. The orders for Gandhiji to quit Champaran were disobeyed by him. Afterwards, an enquiry commission was set up which ordered the sharecroppers to get 25 per cent of their money.

The cruel landlords were made to surrender the partial amount of the extorted money. The efforts of Gandhiji and the peasants made the government realise its mistake.

Q.6. Exploitation is a universal phenomenon. The poor indigo farmers were exploited by the British landlords to which Gandhiji objected. Even after our independence we find exploitation in unorganised labour sector.

What values do we learn from Gandhiji's campaign to counter the present day problems of exploitation?

[CBSE Delhi 2013]

Ans. The weak are exploited and the strong prey on them is a universal fact. In the case of the poor illiterate indigo farmers, they were exploited by the British landlords. Gandhiji objected to it and freed the farmers from the agreement and brought an end to indigo share cropping. In his manner of tackling the issue, he went stepwise: (1) he gathered information (2) fearlessly he stated his points (3) in the final negotiations he did not bother about the money; it was the submission of the opponent's pride and prestige.

Similarly, we can proceed with such issues as Gandhiji's method of solving the problem has universality about it. Today we can follow it this way: one must be fully aware of

one's weaknesses and must try to overcome them, find ways of getting justice, never give in to any kind of exploitation, if trapped try to come out of it wisely, get united when in trouble and seek help. Do not compromise your self-respect, values or dignity at any cost. Try to come out of the darkness of ignorance as soon as possible. Mistakes once made, must not be repeated.

Q.7. Though Rajkumar Shukla was an illiterate peasant; he was resolute and was able to bring a change in the lives of the people of Champaran. Taking hints from the text, write an article on the topic, "Grit and Determination can take you a long way".

[CBSE Sample Paper 2015]

Ans. Grit and determination plays a very important role in one's life. A person who doesn't give up too easily and has tendency to step ahead without thinking too much about the difficulties is able to accomplish anything. We can take the example of Rajkumar Shukla. He wanted Gandhiji to go with him to his area called Champaran. Gandhiji was engaged at that time. However, Shukla did not leave Gandhiji. He followed him wherever he went. Finally, Gandhiji had to arrange and fix time to go with him. Shukla's resolute nature led to a change in the lives of the people of Champaran. His persistence bore fruit. It is important to pursue our goals with grit and determination to be successful. The will to succeed will one day result in triumph. It is possible that it might take a long time to succeed but success will definitely be achieved.

Q.8. 'Dialogue and not violence can resolve situations of conflict and injustice.' Prove the statement with reference to the lesson Indigo.

[CBSE Sample Paper 2016]

Ans. Gandhiji met Rajkumar Shukla, a poor peasant from Champaran at Lucknow. Shukla wanted Gandhiji to come to Champaran to help the poor sharecroppers who were compelled by the British to grow indigo on 15 % of their land and part with it as rent. Since the development of synthetic indigo, cultivation of indigo had become a waste. The landlords wanted sharecroppers to sign agreements to pay them compensation to be freed from the 15 percent arrangement. Understanding the problem Gandhiji wanted to meet secretary of British Landlord's Association but he was refused. Then he tried to meet Commissioner of Tirhut who bullied him and ordered to leave. However he defied the order and organized a gathering of the peasants around the court. Gandhiji proved that British power was no longer unchangeable. The authorities got afraid and postponed the case. Gandhiji was released on bail. He inspired the lawyers to fight for justice for the sharecroppers. The case was dropped and Gandhi agreed for 25% refund as was agreed by landlords. Finally indigo sharecropping was abandoned and land given to peasants. This became the first success of Non co-operation movement for Gandhiji.

Q.9. Gandhiji won the struggle for Champaran specifically because of his good leadership qualities. Write a paragraph on 'Qualities of a good leader'.

Ans. A leader is someone who leads the minds of others and convinces them to follow his set of ideas and beliefs. As such, there are some qualities inherent in the persona of the leader that sets him apart from the rest. One of these qualities includes dedication to one's work. His enthusiasm is evident in his work and life, and this inspires others to follow him. A good leader is courageous in the face of adversity and never quits. He motivates and encourages others, bringing out the best in them. He appreciates the efforts of others and is not biased or impartial.