Flamingo Chapter-5

 Indigo

 -Louis Fischer

This chapter belongs to Mahatma Gandhi, a prominent political leader of India known as ‘Bapu’(The Father of The Nation. He is role in the freedom movement of India is unforgettable.

**About The Author**

 Louis Fischer was born on 29 February 1896 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. First, he worked as a

school teacher. Then he served as a volunteer in the British Army during the First World War and then he made a career as a journalist and wrote for ‘The New York Times’, ‘The Saturday Review’ and for ‘European and Asian Publications’. As a journalist he lived through and reported the Second World War.

He was a Jewish-American who was greatly influenced by Gandhiji’s use of non-violence and spiritualism as political tools. He wrote highly acclaimed books on Gandhi and Lenin. He died at the age of 73 on 15 January 1970 in Princeton, New Jersey, USA.

**About The Chapter**

This chapter is an excerpt from Louis Fischer’s famous book ‘The Life of Mahatma Gandhi’. The writer observed Gandhiji’s work to fight for the cause of the voiceless, downtrodden Indians who reeled under the rule of the indifferent, oppressive colonial British rule. ‘Indigo’ is one of the many episodes of Gandhi’s long political struggle.

The chapter describes the Champaran visit of Mahatma Gandhi which was undertaken casually on the entreaty of a poor peasant, Rajkumar Shukla, in the expectation that it would last a few days, occupied almost a year of Gandhi’s life.

The story describes Gandhiji’s struggle for the cause of the sharecroppers of Bihar and how he asked the Britshers to leave the country.

It highlights the leadership shown by Gandhi to secure justice for oppressed people.

**About The Characters**

Gandhiji- A prominent political leader of India (The Father of The Nation.

Rajkumar Shukla- A poor, emaciated but resolute peasant of Champaran.

Rajendra Prasad- A lawyer who later became the First President of India.

J.B. Kripalani- A professor of the Arts College in Muzzafarpur.

Malkani- A Government school teacher.

Sir Edward Gait- The Lieutenant Governor.

Mahadev Desai and Narhari Parikh- Volunteer teachers.

Kasturbai- Gandhi’s wife.

Devdas- Gandhi’s youngest son.

Months passed. Shukla was sitting on his haunches at the appointed spot in Calcutta when Gandhi arrived; he waited till Gandhi was free. Then the two of them boarded a train for the city of Patna in Bihar. There Shukla led him to the house of a lawyer named Rajendra Prasad who later became the President of the Congress party and of India. Rajendra Prasad was out of town, but the servants knew Shukla as a poor yeoman who pestered their master to help the indigo sharecroppers. So they let him stay on the ground with his companion, Gandhi, whom they took to be another peasant. But Gandhi was not permitted to draw water from the well lest some drops from his bucket pollute the entire source; how did they know that he was not an untouchable?

Tenacity: determination
Haunches: thighs
Boarded: get on, enter
Yeoman: a man who cultivates a small piece of land
Pestered: bother, harass
Permitted: allowed

**As Gandhi was impressed with the determination of the peasant, he said that he would be visiting Kolkata after a few months and that Shukla should meet him there. On the day that had been fixed, Shukla was eagerly waiting for Gandhiji. When Gandhi got free, they both took a train to Patna. Then they went to the house of a lawyer- Rajendra Prasad who later became the President of India. When they reached there, he was not at home. But the servants allowed both of them to stay at the grounds because they knew Shukla. They all knew him because Shukla used to assist their master in helping indigo sharecroppers. They didn’t allow Gandhi to draw water from their well as they took him to be an untouchable and didn’t want to pollute the entire water source.**

Gandhi decided to go first to Muzaffarpur, which was en route to Champaran, to obtain a more complete information about conditions than Shukla was capable of imparting. He accordingly sent a telegram to Professor J.B. Kripalani, of the Arts College in Muzaffarpur, whom he had seen at Tagore’s Shantiniketan School. The train arrived at midnight, 15 April 1917. Kripalani was waiting at the station with a large body of students. Gandhi stayed there for two days in the home of Professor Malkani, a teacher in a government school.

En route: on the way
Imparting: pass on, giving

**As Shukla was not able to provide Gandhi with adequate information, therefore, he decided to go to Muzaffarpur which was on the way to Champaran to obtain the complete information. He sent a telegram to Professor J.B Kriplani who was a teacher at Arts College in Muzaffarpur. Gandhi had seen him at Tagore’s Shantiniketan School. Gandhi took a train to Muzaffarpur that arrived at midnight on 15th April 1917. Kriplani was already waiting there with his students. Gandhi stayed there for two days at Professor Malkani’s home who was a teacher in a government school.**

‘‘It was an extraordinary thing ‘in those days,’’ Gandhi commented, “for a government professor to harbour a man like me”. In smaller localities, the Indians were afraid to show sympathy for advocates of home-rule.

The news of Gandhi’s advent and of the nature of his mission spread quickly through Muzzafarpur and to Champaran. Sharecroppers from Champaran began arriving on foot and by conveyance to see their champion. Muzzafarpur lawyers called on Gandhi to brief him; they frequently represented peasant groups in court; they told him about their cases and reported the size of their fee

Extraordinary: exceptional, remarkable
Harbour: here, entertain
Sympathy: support, pity
Advocate: supporter, protector
Advent: arrival
Conveyance: transportation

**According to Gandhi, it was a remarkable thing that a government professor was entertaining him because in those days people in small localities were afraid of supporting those who supported home rule. The news of Gandhi’s arrival and the purpose of his mission spread through Muzaffarpur and Champaran, very fast. Sharecroppers started to visit him. Muzaffarpur lawyers informed Gandhi about the whole situation as they represented various peasants in the court. They explained to him about their cases and the fee that they charged them.**

Gandhi chided the lawyers for collecting big fee from the sharecroppers. He said, ‘‘I have come to the conclusion that we should stop going to the law courts. Taking such cases to the courts does litte good. Where the peasants are so crushed and fear-stricken, law courts are useless. The real relief for them is to be free from fear.’’
Most of the arable land in the Champaran district was divided into large estates owned by Englishmen and worked by Indian tenants. The chief commercial crop was indigo. The landlords compelled all tenants to plant three twentieths or 15 percent of their holdings with indigo and surrender the entire indigo harvest as rent. This was done by long-term contract.

Chided: criticize, scold
Conclusion: result, end of something
Fear stricken: afraid
Arable: land suitable for farming
Tenants: occupants paying rent in cash or kind
Estate: property
Compelled: forced
Surrendered: to give in
Contract: agreement
Indigo: plant that produces a blue color

**Gandhi scolded the lawyers for charging such high fee from the poor sharecroppers. He decided that it was useless to go to the courts as the judiciary was not doing anything good for the peasants. He said that as long as the peasants were suppressed and full of fear, it was useless to visit the courts. He wanted to set them free from fear. Most of the cultivable land in the Champaran district was owned by Englishmen who had divided them into various estates (property). The peasants were the occupants of these lands. Englishmen forced the peasants to cultivate indigo on 15 percent of their land and to give the crop to them as rent. All this was done through a long term agreement.**

Presently, the landlords learned that Germany had developed synthetic indigo. They, thereupon, obtained agreements from the sharecroppers to pay them compensation for being released from the 15 percent arrangement.

The sharecropping arrangement was irksome to the peasants, and many signed willingly. Those who resisted, engaged lawyers; the landlords hired thugs. Meanwhile, the information about synthetic indigo reached the illiterate peasants who had signed, and they wanted their money back.

Learned: come to know
Synthetic: Chemical based, artificial
Compensation: payments
Arrangement: Process
Irksome: irritating
Resisted: opposed, to be against something
Thugs: cheats
Illiterate: uneducated

***While all this was going on, the landlords came to know about the chemical indigo being prepared in Germany. It was a blue color dye made with chemicals. They started demanding money from the poor peasants in order to cancel their agreements as they no longer required the indigo plantations. The sharecropping system was very annoying, so many of the peasants paid for the cancellation of the agreements. But as the news about synthetic indigo spread and reached the uneducated peasants, they started demanding their money back.***

At this point Gandhi arrived in Champaran. He began by trying to get the facts. First he visited the secretary of the British landlord’s association. The secretary told him that they could give no information to an outsider. Gandhi answered that he was no outsider.

Next, Gandhi called on the British official commissioner of the Tirhut division in which the Champaran district lay. ‘‘The commissioner,’’ Gandhi reports, ‘‘proceeded to bully me and advised me forthwith to leave Tirhut.’’

Proceeded: begin a course of action
Bully: trying to harm others considering them to be weak
Forthwith: immediately, at once

*When Gandhi arrived at Champaran, he decided to gather the facts. For this, he visited the secretary of the British landlord’s association. The secretary didn’t answer him because he could not give any information to an outsider. After this, he went to the commissioner of the Tirhut division. Champaran district was under Tirhut division. The commissioner not only threatened Gandhi but also suggested him to leave Tirhut immediately.*



Gandhi did not leave. Instead he proceeded to Motihari, the capital of Champaran. Several lawyers accompanied him. At the railway station, a vast multitude greeted Gandhi. He went to a house and, using it as headquarters, continued his investigations. A report came in that a peasant had been maltreated in a nearby village. Gandhi decided to go and see; the next morning he started out on the back of an elephant. He had not proceeded far when the police superintendent’s messenger overtook him and ordered him to return to town in his carriage. Gandhi complied. The messenger drove Gandhi home where he served him with an official notice to quit Champaran immediately. Gandhi signed a receipt for the notice and wrote on it that he would disobey the order.

Accompanied: go along with someone
Multitude: a large number of people
Investigations: inquiries
Maltreated: ill treat
Superintendent: Manager, supervisor
Overtook: went ahead of him
Complied: followed or obeyed

*Though Gandhi was threatened by the commissioner, he didn’t leave the place. He then went to Motihari which was the capital of Champaran. He was joined by several lawyers. When they reached the station, they were welcomed by a large number of people. He then went to a house which was later converted into his headquarters. He started his inquiry into the matter. Gandhi decided to visit a nearby village when he came to know about an incident of ill treatment with a peasant. He was on his way, on an elephant, when the superintendent’s (Supervisor) messenger stop him and ordered him to return back to the town. Gandhi followed him and the messenger took him back to his home. He was then served a notice which ordered him to quit his movement and return back. Gandhi received the notice and signed a receipt on which he wrote that he would not obey the order.*

In consequence, Gandhi received the summons to appear in court the next day.

All night Gandhi remained awake. He telegraphed Rajendra Prasad to come from Bihar with influential friends. He sent instructions to the ashram. He wired a full report to the Viceroy.

Morning found the town of Motihari black with peasants. They did not know Gandhi’s record in South Africa. They had merely heard that a Mahatma who wanted to help them was in trouble with the authorities. Their spontaneous demonstration, in thousands, around the courthouse was the beginning of their liberation from fear of the British.

Consequence: result
Influential: powerful
Wired: Telegraphed
Merely: only
Authorities: officials, power
Spontaneous: voluntary, unforced
Demonstrations: protest
Courthouse: court building
Liberation: release

***As a result, Gandhi got summons to appear in court next day.Gandhi wasn’t able to sleep the whole night. He telegraphed Rajendra Prasad and asked him to come to Bihar and get some powerful people along. He sent some guidelines to the Ashram and also telegraphed the whole matter to the viceroy. Next morning, Motihari was full of peasants as they wanted to support Gandhi. None of them knew about his works in South Africa. They only knew that there was a Mahatma who wanted to help them and was in trouble due to the officials. They started gathering in front of the courthouse. This incident was their attempt of setting themselves free from the fear of the British.***

The officials felt powerless without Gandhi’s cooperation. He helped them regulate the crowd. He was polite and friendly. He was giving them concrete proof that their might, hitherto dreaded and unquestioned, could be challenged by Indians.

The government was baffled. The prosecutor requested the judge to postpone the trial. Apparently, the authorities wished to consult their superiors.

Concrete: solid
Hitherto: Earlier, Previously
Dreaded: regarded with great fear or apprehension
Unquestioned: not examined or inquired into
Baffled: confused
Prosecutor: Lawyer or barrister
Postpone: delay
Apparently: seemingly, evidently

***As the crowd had gathered in front of the court building, it became difficult for the officers to control the mob. They had to take Gandhi’s help to regulate the crowd. Gandhi politely told the officials that if they would misuse their power, then there were chances that they would have to face a revolt from the Indians. As the situation was getting tougher, the lawyer requested the court to postpone the trial by some days. The authorities decided to first consult the higher authorities.***

Gandhi protested against the delay. He read a statement pleading guilty. He was involved, he told the court, in a “conflict of duties”— on the one hand, not to set a bad example as a lawbreaker; on the other hand, to render the “humanitarian and national service” for which he had come. He disregarded the order to leave, “not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience”. He asked the penalty due.

The magistrate announced that he would pronounce sentence after a two-hour recess and asked Gandhi to furnish bail for those 120 minutes. Gandhi refused. The judge released him without bail.

Protested: objected, disapproved
Pleading: the action of making an emotional or earnest appeal to someone
Guilty: at fault
Conflict: to be against someone
Humanitarian: Concerned with human welfare
Conscience: sense of right and wrong
Magistrate: civil officer who administers law
Pronounce: declare or announce
recess: break
bail: an amount of money that a person who has been accused of a crime pays to a law court so that they can be released until their trial.

***Gandhiji objected against the delay in the proceedings of the case. He read a statement in front of the court in which he accepted his fault in a very humble manner. He said that he was not a lawbreaker and didn’t want to go against the law but his duty towards humanity has a greater influence on him and it forced him to do so. He refused to leave the town because he wanted to help the sharecroppers as it was his moral duty. The magistrate asked him to arrange for bail because he was going to give his judgement after the 2 hour long break. Gandhiji refused to seek bail and later on, he was released without it.***

When the court reconvened, the judge said he would not deliver the judgment for several days. Meanwhile he allowed Gandhi to remain at liberty.

Rajendra Prasad, Brij Kishor Babu, Maulana Mazharul Huq and several other prominent lawyers had arrived from Bihar. They conferred with Gandhi. What would they do if he was sentenced to prison, Gandhi asked. Why, the senior lawyer replied, they had come to advise and help him; if he went to jail there would be nobody to advise and they would go home.

Reconvened: to start again after a small break
Liberty: free
Prominent: Important, well known
Conferred: granted

*When the court proceedings restarted, the judge refused to deliver any judgement for many days to come. He allowed Gandhi to remain free. Some well known lawyers like Rajendra Prasad, Brij Kishor Babu and Maulana Mazharul Huq came from Bihar to help and advice Gandhi. Gandhi asked that if he was sentenced to jail, then what would be their course of action. One senior lawyer replied that they were there to help him out and if he was sentenced to jail, then they would return back.*

What about the injustice to the sharecroppers, Gandhi demanded. The lawyers withdrew to consult. Rajendra Prasad has recorded the upshot of their consultations — “They thought, amongst themselves, that Gandhi was totally a stranger, and yet he was prepared to go to prison for the sake of the peasants; if they, on the other hand, being not only residents of the adjoining districts but also those who claimed to have served these peasants, should go home, it would be shameful desertion”

They accordingly went back to Gandhi and told him they were ready to follow him into jail. ‘‘The battle of Champaran is won,’’ he exclaimed. Then he took a piece of paper and divided the group into pairs and put down the order in which each pair was to court arrest.

Injustice: unfairness
Withdrew: left
Upshot: result, conclusion
Consultations: discussion
Desertion: action of leaving a place, organization etc

*When Gandhi came to know about their decision, he asked them to help the sharecroppers who were facing unfairness. Rajendra Prasad and other lawyers concluded that if Gandhi could go to jail for the people of their area, although he was a stranger, then they should also follow him as they had always claimed to serve the peasants and fought their legal battles too. They decided that if Gandhi went to jail, then they would follow too. On hearing this, Gandhi assured them that their struggle for Champaran’s peasants had been won. He divided the group into pairs of two and made a sequence in which they had to voluntarily surrender in the court.*

Several days later, Gandhi received a written communication from the magistrate informing him that the Lieutenant-Governor of the province had ordered the case to be dropped.

Civil disobedience had triumphed, the first time in modern India.

Gandhi and the lawyers now proceeded to conduct a far-flung inquiry into the grievances of the farmers. Depositions by about ten thousand peasants were written down, and notes made on other evidence. Documents were collected. The whole area throbbed with the activity of the investigators and the vehement protests of the landlords.

Lieutenant-Governor: deputy governor
Province: region, territory
Civil Disobedience: peaceful form of political protest
Triumphed: won
Grievances: complaints
Depositions: a formal written statement
Evidence: proof
Throbbed: produced a lot of vibrations due to a huge crowd
Investigators: the inspectors
Vehement: showing strong feeling; forceful, passionate, or intense.

*After some days, the Magistrate sent a letter to Gandhiji in which it was written that as per the orders of deputy governor, the case against him had been taken back. It was for the first time in modern India that a peaceful protest against the government had been won. Gandhi and other lawyers carried on with an in - depth investigation into the injustice with the farmers. Statements of about ten thousand peasants were recorded and various documentary proofs were collected. The whole area vibrated with activity- the investigators and the protesting landlords.*

 **26.06.2020**

In June, Gandhi was summoned to Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant-Governor. Before he went he met leading associates and again laid detailed plans for civil disobedience if he should not return.

Gandhi had four protracted interviews with the Lieutenant- Governor who, as a result, appointed an official commission of inquiry into the indigo sharecroppers’ situation. The commission consisted of landlords, government officials, and Gandhi as the sole representative of the peasants.

Summoned: called
Leading: prominent, popular
Associates: supporters
Protracted: lasting for a long time or longer than expected or usual.
Representative: spokesperson, agent

*In June, Gandhi was called up to be present before deputy governor Sir Edward Gait. Before meeting him, he met his chief supporters and made plans for civil disobedience, in case he did not return. Gandhi had four long interviews with the deputy commissioner which led to the formation of a commission that inquired into the indigo sharecroppers’ situation. The commission had landlords, government officials and Gandhi who was the only spokesperson for the peasants.*

Gandhi remained in Champaran for an initial uninterrupted period of seven months and then again for several shorter visits. The visit, undertaken casually on the entreaty of an unlettered peasant in the expectation that it would last a few days, occupied almost a year of Gandhi’s life.

The official inquiry assembled a crushing mountain of evidence against the big planters, and when they saw this they agreed, in principle, to make refunds to the peasants. “But how much must we pay?” they asked Gandhi.

Initial: at the start
Uninterrupted: continuous
Entreaty: an earnest or humble request
Assembled: gathered

*Gandhi remained in Champaran for seven months. He also made several short visits later. His visit on the request of a peasant was presumed to last a few days but it took a year. The official enquiry didn’t favor the planters, hence, they agreed to pay back to the peasants. But they questioned Gandhi regarding the amount to be repaid.*

They thought he would demand repayment in full of the money which they had illegally and deceitfully extorted from the sharecroppers. He asked only 50 per cent. “There he seemed adamant,” writes Reverend J. Z. Hodge, a British missionary in Champaran who observed the entire episode at close range. “Thinking probably that he would not give way, the representative of the planters offered to refund to the extent of 25 per cent, and to his amazement Mr. Gandhi took him at his word, thus breaking the deadlock.
”This settlement was adopted unanimously by the commission. Gandhi explained that the amount of the refund was less important than the fact that the landlords had been obliged to surrender part of the money and, with it, part of their prestige. Therefore, as far as the peasants were concerned, the planters had behaved as lords above the law. Now the peasant saw that he had rights and defenders. He learned courage.

Deceitfully: dishonestly
Extorted: took forcibly
Adamant: firm
Amazement: surprise
Obliged: required, made legally bound to do something
Deadlock: a situation in which no progress can be made
Unanimously: without opposition
Prestige: honour, esteem
Defenders: protector

*The moneylenders had thought that Gandhi would ask for the full payment of the money which they had taken from the peasants forcefully and fraudulently. But he asked for only fifty percent and his decision was firm. A missionary, Reverend J. Z. Hodge who had a close watch on the matter reported this. The planters offered to pay only 25 percent as they thought it would be rejected by Gandhi. He immediately accepted it. Gandhi said that the amount of money was not important but by giving money, the planters had bowed down to the peasants and had given away their honour too. The planters who earlier behaved as if they were above the law, now had to abide by it. This made the peasants realize their rights and give them courage to fight for them.*

 ***30.06.2020***

Events justified Gandhi’s position. Within a few years the British planters abandoned their estates, which reverted to the peasants. Indigo sharecropping disappeared.
Gandhi never contented himself with large political or economic solutions. He saw the cultural and social backwardness in the Champaran villages and wanted to do something about it immediately. He appealed for teachers. Mahadev Desai and Narhari Parikh, two young men who had just joined Gandhi as disciples, and their wives, volunteered for the work. Several more came from Bombay, Poona and other distant parts of the land. Devadas, Gandhi’s youngest son, arrived from the ashram and so did Mrs. Gandhi. Primary schools were opened in six villages. Kasturbai taught the ashram rules on personal cleanliness and community sanitation.

Justified: marked by a good or legitimate reason
Abandoned: deserted, inhibited
Estates: property
Reverted: returned
Contented: willing to accept something, satisfied

*Events had proven Gandhi’s position. The British planters had to leave their property within the next few years. These properties were returned back to the peasants. Indigo sharecropping soon came to an end. Gandhi was not satisfied by achieving political or economic solutions - he sought to remove the cultural and social backwardness of Champaran. Gandhi wanted to do something to remove the backwardness in the villages of Champaran. He requested teachers such as Mahadev Desai and Narhai Parikh and their wives to teach the villagers. Both of them were followers of Gandhi. Many other volunteers came from Bombay and Poona to join them. Mrs. Gandhi and their youngest son Devdas arrived from the ashram for their help. Primary schools were opened in six villages where Kasturbai used to teach the ashram rules on cleanliness and community sanitation.*

Health conditions were miserable. Gandhi got a doctor to volunteer his services for six months. Three medicines were available — castor oil, quinine and sulphur ointment. Anybody who showed a coated tongue was given a dose of castor oil; anybody with malaria fever received quinine plus castor oil; anybody with skin eruptions received ointment plus castor oil.

Gandhi noticed the filthy state of women’s clothes. He asked Kasturbai to talk to them about it. One woman took Kasturbai into her hut and said, ‘‘look, there is no box or cupboard here for clothes. The sari I am wearing is the only one I have.”

Miserable: unhappy, sad
Volunteer: a person who offers his service free of cost
Eruptions: here, a spot, rash, or other mark appearing suddenly on the skin.

*The health conditions of the people of Champaran were very poor. So, Gandhi got a doctor who offered his services free of cost for six months. There were only three medicines- castor oil, quinine and sulphur ointment available. A patient with a coated tongue was given Castor oil, a malaria patient was served a dose of quinine and a patient with a skin disorder was given ointment and castor oil. The women of the area used to wear dirty clothes. When Gandhiji tried to know the reason through his wife, he was told that those were the only saris each of the women had.*

During his long stay in Champaran, Gandhi kept a long distance watch on the ashram. He sent regular instructions by mail and asked for financial accounts. Once he wrote to the residents that it was time to fill in the old latrine trenches and dig new ones otherwise the old ones would begin to smell bad.

The Champaran episode was a turning-point in Gandhi’s life. ‘‘What I did,” he explained, “was a very ordinary thing. I declared that the British could not order me about in my own country.”
Instructions: orders, commands
Residents: locals

*While Gandhiji was in Champaran, he kept a long distance vigil on the ashram. He used to send letters of orders regarding financial matters. Once, he wrote to the locals that it was time to dig new latrines as the old ones had started giving foul smell. The Champaran incident changed Gandhi’s life. He said that he had done a regular thing- he had put his point across that the Britishers could not order him in his own country.*

But Champaran did not begin as an act of defiance. It grew out of an attempt to alleviate the distress of large numbers of poor peasants. This was the typical Gandhi pattern — his politics were intertwined with the practical, day-to-day problems of the millions. His was not a loyalty to abstractions; it was a loyalty to living, human beings.
In everything Gandhi did, moreover, he tried to mould a new free Indian who could stand on his own feet and thus make India free.

Defiance: opposition
Alleviate: uplift
Distress: torture
Intertwined: twisted, braided, knitted
Abstractions: something which exists only as an idea.

*The Champaran satyagraha was not an act of opposition. It was an attempt to help out the poor and tortured peasants. This was Gandhi's way to solve issues. His politics was knitted up with the everyday problems faced by the millions of people. He did not aim at the fulfilment of ideas, rather, he was concerned for the people. The basic idea was to serve humanity and make a free Indian who could stand for his rights.*

Early in the Champaran action, Charles Freer Andrews, the English pacifist who had become a devoted follower of the Mahatma, came to bid Gandhi farewell before going on a tour of duty to the Fiji Islands. Gandhi’s lawyer friends thought it would be a good idea for Andrews to stay in Champaran and help them. Andrews was willing if Gandhi agreed. But Gandhi was vehemently opposed. He said, ‘‘you think that in this unequal fight it would be helpful if we have an Englishman on our side. This shows the weakness of your heart. The cause is just and you must rely upon yourselves to win the battle. You should not seek a prop in Mr. Andrews because he happens to be an Englishman’’.
‘‘He had read our minds correctly,’’ Rajendra Prasad comments, “and we had no reply… Gandhi in this way taught us a lesson in self-reliance’’.

Self-reliance, Indian independence and help to sharecroppers were all bound together.

Pacifist: Peace maker
Vehemently: in an intense manner
Self Reliance: self sufficiency, self support
prop: support

*Charles Freer Andrews who was a peacemaker, visited Gandhi before going on a tour of duty to the Fiji islands. Gandhi’s lawyer friends wanted Andrews to stay at the Ashram and help them but Gandhi refused. He said that they did not need the help of Britishers as it showed a lack of trust in their own abilities. He asked them not to seek any help from Mr. Andrews as he was an Englishman. Rajendra Prasad later on stated that Gandhi had read their thoughts and his reply served as a lesson of self sufficiency for them. Being self dependant, free and helping the peasants - all these acts of Gandhi were inter connected.*