

GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA
DIRECTORATE OF AGRICULTURE
MEGHALAYA :: SHILLONG

1917 iTEAMS LOGO CONTEST

Background of 1917

On 19th April 1917, Mahatma Gandhi along with Brajkishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha Ramnavmi Prasad, and others including J. B. Kripalani with organized and launched the Champara Satyagraha of 1917, in the Champaran district of Bihar, India during the period of the British Raj. It was the first Satyagraha movement inspired by Mohandas Gandhi and a major revolt in the Indian Independence Movement. Champaran Satyagraha was the first to be started and was the genesis for the word "Satyagraha" which was used for the first time in the Anti Rowlatt Act agitation.

Under Colonial era laws, many tenant farmers were forced to grow some indigo on a portion of their land as a condition of their tenancy. This indigo was used to make dye. The Germans had invented a cheaper artificial dye so the demand for indigo fell. Some tenants paid more rent in return for being let off having to grow indigo. However, during the First World War the German dye ceased to be available and so indigo became profitable again. Thus many tenants were once again forced to grow it on a portion of their land- as was required by their lease. Naturally, this created much anger and resentment amongst farmers.

Many tenants alleged that Landlords had used strong-arm tactics to exact illegal cesses and to extort them in other ways. This issue had been highlighted by a number of lawyers/politicians and there had also been a Commission of Inquiry. Raj Kumar Shukla, a money lender who also owned some land, persuaded Gandhi to go to Champaran and thus, the Champaran Satyagraha began. Gandhi arrived in Champaran on 10th April 1917 with a team of eminent lawyers: Brajkishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha Ramnavmi Prasad, and others, including J. B. Kripalani.

Gandhi established the first-ever basic school at Barharwa Lakhansen village, 30 km east from the district headquarters at Dhaka, East Champaran, on November 13, 1917, organizing scores of his veteran supporters and fresh volunteers from the region. His handpicked team of eminent lawyers comprising of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Anugrah Narayan Sinha & Babu Brajkishore Prasad organized a detailed study and survey of the villages, accounting the atrocities and terrible episodes of suffering, including the general state of degenerate living.

Building on the confidence of villagers, he began leading the clean-up of villages, building of schools and hospitals and encouraging the village leadership to undo purdah, untouchability and the suppression of women. Gandhi set up two more basic schools at Bhitiharwa in West Champaran and Madhuban in this district on November 30, 1917 and January 17, 1918. The purpose behind setting up these schools was to fight illiteracy and generate awareness among the rural people. He was joined by many young nationalists from all over India, including Brajkishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Acharya Kriplani, Ram Navami Prasad and later Jawaharlal Nehru.

But his main assault came as he was arrested by police on the charge of creating unrest and was ordered to leave the province. Hundreds of thousands of people protested and rallied outside the jail, police

