



गुजरात केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय
(भारत की संसद के अधिनियम सं. 25, 2009 के तहत स्थापित)

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF GUJARAT

**Centre for Studies and Research in Gandhian Thought and Peace
School of Social Sciences
Organises**

**One Day
National Seminar
On
Debating Satyagraha: Hundred Years of Champaran Satyagraha
20th April 2017**

Concept Note

April 15, 2017 marks hundred years of Champaran Satyagraha, Gandhi's first Satyagraha in India. The issue of *teenkathiya* became the contentious issue between planters and *ryots*. This commenced a slew of discourses and initiatives which would shape India freedom struggle and Republic of India. The Indian National Congress in its 31st annual session (Lucknow, December 1916) adopted the following resolution, read by Brajkishore Prasad. Gandhi was requested to present the resolution which he denied in the absence of concrete information. The resolution is as follows: "The Congress most respectfully urges on the Government the desirability of appointing a mixed Committee of officials and non-officials to inquire into the causes of agrarian trouble and the strained relations between the Indigo ryots and the European planters in North Bihar and to suggest remedies therefore" (cited in Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, p.98). Rajkumar Shukla was also present as one of the representatives of *ryots*. According to Rajendra Prasad, "It is worth mentioning here that it was perhaps the first time in its history that the Congress had to listen to the grievances of the tenants from the lips" (p. 99). Gandhi agreed to come to Champaran to see the plights of ryots and reached Champaran on April 15, 1917. Upon his arrival, he received the following order from the then district magistrate of Champaran W. B. Heycock: "At present in Motihari, whereas it has been made to appear to me from the letter of the Commissioner of the Division, copy of which is attached to this order, that your presence in any part of the District will endanger the public peace and may lead to serious disturbance which may be accompanied by loss of life and whereas urgency is of the utmost importance; Now therefore I do hereby order you to abstain from remaining in the District, which you are required to leave by the next available train" (P.107).

Gandhi's response was perhaps the first instance of civil disobedience against the British Empire in India. He responded: "Sir, with reference to the order under section 144 Criminal

Procedure Code just served upon me I beg to state that I am sorry that you have felt called upon to issue it and I am sorry, too, that the Commissioner of the division has totally misinterpreted my position. Out of a sense of public responsibility, I feel it to be my duty to say that I am unable to leave the District but if it so please the authorities, I shall submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience. I must emphatically repudiate the Commissioner's suggestion that my object is likely to be agitation. My desire is purely and simply for a genuine search for knowledge. And this I shall continue to satisfy so long as I am free". Furthermore, in another letter to W. B. Heycock on May 20, 1917, Gandhi writes: "...It is a known fact that the desire of the planters generally is, that my friends and I should not carry on our work. I can only say that nothing but physical force from the Government or an absolute guarantee that the admitted or provable wrongs of the raiyats are to stop for ever, can possibly remove us from the District. What I have seen of the conditions of the raiyats is sufficient to convince me that if we withdrew at this stage, we would stand condemned before man and God and, what is most important of all, we would never be able to forgive ourselves. But the mission is totally of peace.". The immediate outcome of Champaran Satyagraha was end of the *teenkathiya* system. Gandhi writes in his Autobiography, "Champaran enquiry was a bold experiment with truth and ahimsa." The experiment was the cornerstone of Gandhian politics in India. For this Satyagraha, Gandhi civilly disobeyed the order of the District Magistrate to leave the district by the first available train. This was Gandhi's first act of disobedience in India. The acceptance and legitimacy Gandhi garnered as a mass leader was anchored on the Champaran campaign. The idea of resolving conflicts through peaceful means gained currency after the success of the Champaran Satyagraha. This satyagraha played a pivotal role in integrating the peasantry, in particular, and the common mass, in general, to the freedom struggle in India. Champaran Satyagraha is very crucial to understand the Gandhian era in the national struggle in India. Indian villages, peasantry and agriculture held central places both in Gandhi's understanding of the then India and in his imagination of future India. The visits to many villages in Champaran made Gandhi realize that one of the main reasons for the problems of the agriculturists were ignorance and squalor. The origin of the Constructive Programme may be traced back to the Chmparan experience. In the aftermath of the Champaran Satyagraha Gandhi, with the help of many selfless volunteers, established some schools to spread education and sanitation among the ryots. In the backdrop of hundred years of Champaran Satyagraha, the national seminar proposes to discuss following themes:

1. *Civil Disobedience and State*: Civil disobedience, as envisaged by Gandhi in Satyagraha, needs a critical presence in state. In other words, civil disobedience and state are intrinsically linked. This needs substantive attention.
2. *Movements and Constructive Programme*: For movements or satyagraha, constructive programs are neo-invention. The former causes ideological mobilization whereas the latter starts immediate intervention in everydayness. The movements and constructive programs needs conjoined attention.
3. *Relevance of Swaraj in Contemporary Time*: Civil Disobedience and constructive programmes also envisage swaraj. The contemporaneous movements and political community needs to debate on *swaraj*.

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07th April 2017

Notice

All the students and faculty members who are interested to participate in the National seminar on the theme of “Debating Satyagraha: Hundred Years of Champaran Satyagraha”, to be held on 20th April 2017, are hereby requested for the submission of online registration. The format is available on the University website: www.cug.ac.in

Deadline:

Last Date of submission of the Registration Form: **18th April 2017**

Dr. B. Jagannatham
Convenor, National seminar