

A Journey in the Laboratory of Life: A Study of 'My Experiments with Truth-An Autobiography'

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, is an interesting read for a discerning reader. His life's journey as etched, is replete with eastern and western influences; ranging from the Gita, the Upanishads, to Tolstoy and Thoreau, to name a few. These influences, percolating through the prism of his persona, indeed leave the reader astounded, as though peering through a kaleidoscope, with each turn providing, but a different, although a beautiful formation of the version of Truth, which he strove to unravel, all through his mortal journey.

This paper will attempt to study these influences on M.K. Gandhi and the culmination of these in the form of Satyagraha, Ahimsa and Self-Reliance and many other principles espoused, which made him worthy of the title of the Mahatma. His experiments undertaken in the laboratory of life, are a rich legacy, which are relevant even today and have touched the lives of not only the elite, but also of Munnabhai's as represented in the mainstream Hindi films, thus, gently prodding each one, all the same, to lead a life guided by Ahimsa and Satya.

Key terms:

Eastern and western influences, Truth, Satyagraha, Ahimsa and Self-Reliance.

“[...] and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” John viii.32. NRSV (1999:101)

These words from the *Bible*, capture the life mission of Mahatma Gandhi. The quest for truth was the ultimate goal of Gandhi's life, which led him to Mahatmahood. Viktor Frankl in '*Yes to Life In spite of Everything*' has drawn attention to the 'fundamental truth'- "being human is nothing other than being conscious and being responsible." (Frankl 2019:47). Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's life was driven by the consciousness of responsibility towards attaining truth. The consistent pursuit of truth and the resultant impact on various spheres of his life, have been a matter of many a scholarly discussions. It would be appropriate to quote Gandhi in this context, "But for me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conceptions, but the Absolute Truth, the eternal principle, that is God." (Gandhi 2017:12)

This paper is an attempt to study Gandhi's autobiography and delineate the influences which transformed him into the 'Hindu mystic'.

Early impressions:

Born into a staunch Vaishnava household, Gandhi was deeply influenced by his mother who was religious and would abstain from food till her daily prayers were accomplished. The foundations of fasting and restraint can be traced here. Gandhi describes his mother as one who took "the hardest of vows and she kept them without flinching. Illness was no excuse for relaxing them." (Gandhi 2017:18) Mythological characters like Shravana from the play '*Shravana Pitri Bhakti*', extolled for his dedicated services to his parents, and the eternally truthful Harischandra; were the earliest influences. The play about Shravana, Gandhi read with intense interest, "Here is an example for you to copy," (Gandhi,2017:20) he said to himself. "Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?" (Gandhi,2017:21) was the question the young Gandhi asked himself often. In fact, Shravana and Harishchandra became living realities for him. The roots of selfless service and

the unflinching insistence on truth can be traced to these outwardly insignificant influences, which were subconsciously chiselling the young mind.

Early betrothal and marriage vis-à-vis ahimsa and brahmacharya:

Betrothed at the age of seven and married at the age of thirteen, Gandhi had his own share of trials with conjugal love. The jealousy and possessiveness, that characterised the newly formed relationship, and the overpowering lust; which eventually matured into a pure marital bond, are very candidly penned in his autobiography. It's essential to mention this, as we witness Gandhi's growth, from being a possessive husband thus: "If I should be pledged to be faithful to my wife, she also should be pledged to be faithful to me, [...] The thought made me a jealous husband. Her duty was easily converted into my right to exact faithfulness from her, and if it had to be exacted, I should be watchfully tenacious of the right." (Gandhi 2017: 24).

The progression, from being a possessive husband to the seeker-on the path of self-realisation, who, as part of the process, understood *ahimsa* in all its aspects, with the "canker of suspicion (being) rooted out." (Gandhi 2017: 36). *Brahmacharya* as an acceptable conduct, made him realise that the wife was not the bond slave of the husband, but an equal partner in all joys and sorrows, who had her own freedom and choices. Eventually, he realised, the path of attaining celibacy was filled with its own set of trials, but was one of the paths in attaining truth.

At this juncture it would be appropriate to refer to Ruby Singh's essay on the genre of autobiography (Singh 2015). Singh has thrown light on the earliest written autobiography of Saint Augustine titled *Confessions* in Latin, written in CE 397. Singh opines, autobiography is traditionally a Western genre drawing on the Catholic ritual of confessions and the classical autobiographical genre based on introspection of the self, confessions of sins, expressions of remorse and guilt, which is indeed very theological in letter and spirit.

Addressed to God, Saint Augustine's autobiography traces those moments and incidents of his life that mark and shape his spiritual development. Singh further elaborates by stating that Saint Augustine expressed the confessions of sins or evil as ways that lead to their cleansing and how he (the sinner Augustine) ultimately turned into a saint, resonances of which, can be found in Gandhi's autobiography.

The confessions of Augustine, states Singh; starting with his initial lack of faith in Christ, stealing fruit as a child, fornication and arrogance of youth, may evoke an ironic smile in the contemporary world, but they have to be understood in the context of early Christianity. (paraphrased from Singh 2015:76) Gandhi's autobiography seems to register similar kind of troughs and peaks, which transformed him into a Mahatma.

Exercise and good handwriting:

Coming back to Gandhi's work, where he attempted to delve deeply into every aspect of life, in order to achieve perfection and a cleansing, he professed the preference for long walks in the open air, which helped him build a fairly hardy constitution. These walks later, paved the path for the 'long marches' that were undertaken in a bid for independence. Besides believing in the power of regular exercise, he believed in good handwriting being a necessary part of education, to develop which, children should learn to draw before learning to write. He expresses thus: "Let the child learn his letters by observation as he does different objects, such as flowers, birds, etc., and let him learn handwriting only after he has learnt to draw objects. He will then write a beautifully formed hand." (Gandhi 2017: 29)

Meat eating and addictions-Lessons in ahimsa:

Amongst his many experiments were acceptance and denial of beliefs. One of them being hiding the unacceptable deed of meat eating from his Vaishnava

parents, which was initially not perceived as departing from truth; as meat eating was an act, that he undertook out of the spirit of bringing about a reform, under the influence of a friend. It was also partly the influence of the Gujarati poet Narmad, who held sway over schoolboys then, the poet expressed the might of the Englishman through his doggerel, thus:

Behold the mighty Englishman
He rules the Indian small,
Because being a meat-eater
He is five cubits tall. (Gandhi 2017: 33)

Not before long, Gandhi overcame this line of thought, as he believed that food reform and eating meat were essential, but deception of parents was not the right way to achieve reforms. Around that time, in fact even before, Gandhi and his relative became fond of smoking, fancying the clouds emitted by the act! To finance this addiction, money was stolen from a servant's pocket money, in order to purchase Indian cigarettes, he eventually overcame this addiction.

Along with this, the young Mohandas stole money on various occasions and the ultimate theft was clipping of a part of his brother's gold armlet, which was utilised to clear the brother's debt of twenty-five rupees. After clearing the debt, he resolved to never ever steal again. He confessed through a note written to his father, asking for an appropriate punishment, he expected violence, but when he saw tears flow down his agonised father's cheeks, that was an object lesson in ahimsa and the power of love. It was possible, only when the confession came out from a pure and repentant heart. Gandhi was thus convinced about the all-embracing power of ahimsa which transformed everything it touched.

The self-realisation after a wrong deed suggests evolution, and growth towards the better self, only an individual who has set out to seek Truth, will but reach there. In this context it would be fitting to mention, another important influence on Gandhi, who has succinctly encapsulated this idea. "But man is not stationary in regard to truth, but every individual man as he passes through life, and humanity as a whole in the same way, is continually learning to know a greater and greater degree of truth, and growing more and more free from error." (Tolstoy 2005: 183)

Ramanama and other influences:

Religion was construed as knowledge of self in the broadest sense for Gandhi. He received the lessons in repetition of the Ramanama to allay his fear of ghosts from his nurse Rambha, at a tender age. Ramanama was an infallible remedy. Gandhi was exposed to his father's friends of all religions, who would discuss about their faiths. This gave him an early grounding in religious tolerance. The *Manusmriti* did not entice Gandhi due to its propagation of violence, and meat eating. Amidst all these influences, Gandhi believed in morality as being the basis of all things and truth being the substance of it. Thus, the pursuit of truth became his sole objective.

At the same time, Gandhi could not accept Christianity as a perfect or greatest of all religions, neither was he convinced of Hinduism to be so with the scourge of untouchability and its division in so many sects and castes. Also, he questioned if the Vedas were inspired by the word of God, why not the Bible or the Koran? Young Gandhi was thus evolving into a rational thinker. Another interesting influence, was a didactic stanza, from Gujarati, which became his guiding principle, that professed returning good for evil:

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;
 For a kindly greeting bow down with zeal;
 For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;
 If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold;
 Thus, the words and the actions of the wise regard;
 Every little service tenfold they reward.
 But the truly noble know all men as one,
 And return with gladness good for evil done. (Gandhi 2017:45)

These influences slowly but surely laid the foundation for the principles of ahimsa and satyagraha.

The vow and departure to England:

After clearing the matriculation examination in 1887, it was unanimously decided that Gandhi should pursue the profession of a Barrister, and in accordance, he was sent to England, not before being administered three vows by the family adviser, to not touch wine, woman and meat. Following which, he was permitted to set off for England. Once in England, procuring vegetarian food was a challenge, after reading the book, Salt's Plea for Vegetarianism, he became a confirmed vegetarian by choice, being a vegetarian was in the interests of truth and the vow he had taken. However after reading the book, the spread of vegetarianism became his mission.

The experiments in dietetics followed this choice, and helped him search deeper and accordingly, an inward and outward change ensued. His experiments in leading a simple life, that was lived frugally, harmonised his inward and outward life. This modification made his life more truthful and added joy.

The moral reform followed the change in diet. Gandhi started a vegetarian club which was dissolved later. However, these associations helped him develop his persona and helped him slowly and steadily improve on the skills of public speaking. Yet, he could never get over the hesitancy in speech and later, he grew to find it to be a pleasure. "Experience has taught me that silence is part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth. [...] My shyness has been in reality my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow. It has helped me in my discernment of truth (Gandhi 2017: 70).

The role of the Gita and its comparison with the Bible:

In the second year of his stay in England, Gandhi came under the influence of two Theosophist brothers, who read the translation of the *Gita* by Sir Edwin Arnold. The verses from the second chapter discussed the impact of the world of 'maya'-the materialistic world, on the purpose of life and on the mind, due to which, man could be completely undone. He considered the *Gita*, as the best resource, for

seeking the knowledge of truth. At the same time the 'Sermon on the Mount' from the New Testament had a different impact, which he compared with the *Gita*. The *Bible* verses, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." and "If any man takes away thy coat, let him have thy cloak too." (Gandhi 2017:75) influenced Gandhi; who compared this with Shamal Bhatt's "For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal." (Gandhi 2017:75)

Assimilating the teachings of the *Gita*, the *Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount, the fact that "renunciation was the highest form of religion", appealed to Gandhi immensely (Gandhi 2017:75).

It would be pertinent to draw attention to Tolstoy's influence on Gandhi's thought processes. Through his book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, Tolstoy expresses, "Not without good reason was Christ's only harsh and threatening reproof directed against hypocrites and hypocrisy. It is not theft nor robbery nor murder nor fornication, but falsehood, the special falsehood of hypocrisy, which corrupts men, brutalizes them and makes them vindictive, destroys all distinction between right and wrong in their conscience, deprives them of what is the true meaning of all real human life, and debars them from all progress toward perfection." (Tolstoy 2005:177-178) This work of Tolstoy impacted the understanding of truth and its many aspects. In his autobiography, Gandhi describes the book as one that promotes independent thinking, is profoundly moral and truthful.

Three moderns:

Gandhi was impacted by three moderns: "Raychandbhai as his living contact; Tolstoy through his book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*; (which has already been mentioned earlier) and Ruskin through his *Unto this Last*." (Gandhi 2017:93)

The teachings of Ruskin from the same text that influenced Gandhi, were as follows:

1. The good of an individual is contained within the good of all.
2. The value of a lawyer's work is the same as that of a barber's, in that all have the same right of earning from their work.
3. The life of labour, i.e. the life of the handicraftsman and the tiller of the soil, is the life worth living. [Our paraphrase of the points] (Gandhi 2017:273)

Gandhi was immensely/extremely influenced by these principles and ready to put them to practice. The influence of Ruskin was irresistible on Gandhi; so much so that he translated Ruskin's '*Unto the Last*' into Gujarati, and named it *Sarvodaya*.

Life and struggle in South Africa:

Kicked, shoved and pushed in South Africa, it was no country for self-respecting Indians. Asiatics in South Africa were regulated and their free movement controlled. Gandhi was known as a 'coolie barrister' there, 'coolie' was a common appellation for all Indians. To salvage self-respect, Gandhi traded the Indian turban for an English hat, as being forced to take out the Indian turban would be construed as an insult.

The Natal Indian Congress fought for the rights of Indians in Natal. Gandhi was Bhai for the indentured labourers in South Africa, who were mostly South Indian. The case of Balasundaram, an indentured Indian labour, who entered Gandhi's office with head gear in hand, was one of the many individuals, for whom Gandhi stood up. Balasundaram was severely beaten by his European master, who lost self-control, which resulted in breaking two of his teeth. Gandhi fought for the transfer of the indenture Balasundaram to somebody else. Gandhi was present in Natal to espouse his cause. When Balasundaram visited Gandhi, he did so with the head gear in his hand. The practice of visiting a European with the head gear in hand was followed in Gandhi's presence too. A salute with both hands was not sufficient. Gandhi asked him to tie up his scarf. Balasundaram did so with a little

bit of hesitation, but a great deal of pleasure on his face. The ill-treatment at the hands of another human being made Gandhi wonder thus:

“It has always been a mystery to me how can men feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow-beings.” (Gandhi 2017:149)

Gandhi knew the causes that needed his energies; the Mahatma, who insisted on wearing the Indian head gear in the District Magistrates court in South Africa, on the other hand took it off, in obedience of the order of the Supreme Court in South Africa. As he wanted to reserve his strength for fighting bigger battles, his skills were to be used for better causes. The pursuit of truth, taught him to appreciate the place of compromise. This spirit, as he saw later in life was an essential part of Satyagraha. This insistence entailed endangering his life and inviting the displeasure of friends. “But truth was as hard, as adamant and tender as a blossom.” (Gandhi 2017:144)

Gaining popularity as the messiah of Indians in South Africa, Gandhi was perceived as a threat by the Natal whites. When he got along his wife and children to settle in Natal, false charges were pressed against him and as a result, all the passengers on the ship were quarantined for an uncertain number of days, under the pretext of preventing the spread of the plague. However, at the end of twenty-four days, the passengers were allowed to enter the harbour. This surely reminds one of times not having changed even in 2020, quarantining people who prove to be a threat to those in power still holds true!

Finalising brahmacharya in 1906:

Gandhi realised, “in order to serve society, he had to relinquish the desire for children and wealth and live the life of a vanaprastha of one retired from household cares.” (Gandhi 2017:194) To attain brahmacharya, control of the palate was a prerequisite, the brahmachari’s food should be ‘satvik’ and “it should be limited, simple, spiceless, and, if possible, uncooked.” (Gandhi 2017:196) Brahmacharya thus entailed control of senses in thought, word and deed. Gandhi began leading

a simple life by cutting down unnecessary expenses, doing the laundry by himself, throwing dependence on the barber, these were the extreme forms in which his passion for self-help and simplicity expressed itself.

He believed, fasting of the physical self was not adequate, it was one of the means to the end of self-restraint, but that was not all, and it was to be accompanied by mental fasting, else it was bound to end in hypocrisy and disaster.

“Passion in man is generally co-existent with a hankering after the pleasures of the palate.” (Gandhi 2017:291) opined Gandhi. As always, the *Gita* influenced Gandhi in pursuing this thought process:

‘For a man who is fasting his senses
Outwardly, the sense-objects disappear,
Leaving the yearning behind; but when
He has seen the Highest,
Even the yearning disappears.’ (*Gita* quoted in Gandhi 2017:302)

The vow of brahmacharya was sealed in the middle of 1906. This was a preparatory step, part of the self-purification exercise undertaken by Gandhi. This paved the path for the movement which was adopted by Gandhi; Satyagraha. The term comprises *Satya* i.e. Truth and *Agraha* i.e. firmness, this was going to be the mainstay of the Indian freedom struggle.

Service and truth: Incessantly serving the Indians in South Africa revealed to Gandhi new implications of truth at every stage. Truth he opined, “... was like a vast tree, which yielded more and more fruit, the more you nurtured it. The deeper the search in the mine of truth, the richer the discovery of the gems buried there, in the shape of openings for an ever-greater variety of service.” (Gandhi 2017:204)

The Phoenix Settlement was a twenty-acres of land near Durban railway station, established in 1904. Gandhi set up his little village with nearly half a dozen industrious people and their families and the Indian Opinion press was set up on the same land. Inmates of Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm and the Sabarmati Ashram co-existed as one large family, who did their own tasks, including scavenging,

cleaning, cooking etc. Living together was a lesson in religious tolerance, as also an exercise in self-reliance.

The influence of Thoreau on Gandhi cannot be denied opines George Hendrick in his essay studying Thoreau's influence on Gandhi (Hendrick 1956) he expresses, Gandhi may have read *Walden* as early as 1906; as it is evident that, before the first *Satyagraha* movement he dispensed with servants, acted as his own scavenger, and attempted to be independent of machinery. His views were seemingly influenced by *Walden*.

Also, readers of *Indian Opinion* were frequently reminded of Thoreau's essay on Civil Disobedience. "Thoreau had opposed the enslavement of man; Indians, being enslaved themselves, needed encouragement in their struggle. The Indian community was openly defying the registration act, and the resistances of Thoreau, Tolstoy, Jesus, and Socrates seemed vital confirmations to Gandhi." (Hendrick 1956:467)

More on the work in South Africa and the influence of the Gita: After having worked for the cause of Indians in South Africa, Gandhi enrolled with the Transvaal Supreme Court and set up office in Johannesburg. The influences on Gandhi of the Theosophists was the belief in universal brotherhood, the Gita, which he had fairly memorised and was his spiritual guide all through his life at all times, "I turned to this (Gita) dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials." (Gandhi 2017:244) These influences were steadily preparing Gandhi for the non-violent war for the nation. The qualities of non-possession and equability presupposed a change of heart and a change of attitude.

'Hate the sin and not the sinner' was a precept that is as easy to understand as it is rare to practise, was what Gandhi believed in and staunchly in ahimsa "... ahimsa is the basis of the search for truth. I am realizing every day that the search is vain unless it is founded on ahimsa as the basis. [...] For we are all tarred with the same brush, and children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being, but with him the whole world." (Gandhi 2017:253). He thus, cultivated consciously the virtues of ahimsa,

brahmacharya, aparigraha and other cardinal virtues. Gandhi believed that the search for Truth should be based on ahimsa. Seeing the divine in every living being and the violation of another fellow being is the violation of oneself and the divine powers that rests in one.

On the act of writing the autobiography:

In the midst of the act of writing his autobiography, Gandhi introspects, he expresses, "I am not writing the autobiography to please critics. Writing it is itself one of the experiments with truth. One of its objects is certainly to provide some comfort and food for reflection for my co-workers." (Gandhi 2017:257)

It would be interesting to once again refer to Rosy Singh's essay on the genre of autobiography, where she has discussed whether autobiography as a genre can be classified as 'fiction' or 'non-fiction'. Singh opines, Gandhiji's autobiography can be defined as the life-story of a Being, it cannot be termed fiction. Some critics therefore call it literary or creative non-fiction. Others who are more distrusting assert that autobiographies are more often than not works of fiction for they invariably 'construct' a positive image of the self (Wagner-Egelhaaf 2000 in Singh 2005:80).

Thus, writing about Gandhi's autobiography, Singh mentions that Gandhi cleverly tried to make his autobiography sound sincere by giving it the title '*The Story of my Experiments with Truth*' (1927) with emphasis on 'truth' and on the scientific nature of his 'experiments'. He further emphasizes his point in the introduction: "I hope to acquaint the reader fully with all my faults and errors. My purpose is to describe experiments in the science of Satyagraha, not to say how good I am. In judging myself I shall try to be as harsh as truth, as I want others also to be." (Gandhi 2008: xiv in Singh 2005:80).

Singh's critique is aimed at warning the reader to read Autobiographies with a pinch of salt, and look through the personal biases that could possibly seep in.

The reader should not turn a blind eye to these biases and erroneously take every word at face value.

Experiments in India:

Coming back to Gandhi's experiments with truth in India, the Champaran inquiry was a bold experiment in truth and ahimsa. Due to the efforts of Gandhi, the planters in Champaran were asked to refund a portion of exactions made by them and the *tinkathia system*² which had been in existence for about a century was abolished. The ryots, who were crushed so far, some what came to their own, the stain of indigo was washed out. Gandhi's ideas were slowly and steadily gaining a strong foothold. To quote Tolstoy once again in this context would be appropriate:

“Just as a single shock may be sufficient, when a liquid is saturated with some salt to precipitate it at once in crystals, a slight effort maybe perhaps all that is needed now that the truth already revealed to many men may gain mastery over hundreds, thousands, millions of men, that a public opinion consistent with conscience may be established, and through this change of public opinion the whole order of life may be transformed. And it depends upon us to make this effort.” (Tolstoy 2005: 185)

Gandhi had garnered the might, through incessant work both in South Africa and in India and was a force, who's slightest of effort, brought about a change in the lives of several Indians. The benevolent father to the inmates of Phoenix, Tolstoy Farm and Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhi fought for the mill hands in Ahmedabad and also reached a peaceful settlement for the peasants - Patidars in Kheda, who were unable to settle the annual assessment, due to the failure of crops and wanted exemption from the same. Gandhi was the driving force behind the adoption of the resolutions supporting Hindu-Muslim unity, the removal of untouchability, and uniting India with khadi.

Conclusion:

Barring a few exceptions like the Chauri Chaura incidence, where people went out of control and defied the principles of ahimsa laid by Gandhi in letter and spirit, Gandhi's experiments in attaining independence, by following non-violence, satyagraha and self-reliance proved to be successful. Towards the conclusion of his autobiography, Gandhi claims that ahimsa is the extreme extent of humility and it should be followed completely. He concludes his autobiography thus: "My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth. [...] that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realisation of *Ahimsa*." (Gandhi 2017:451-452)

Tolstoy opines, "The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity by contributing to the establishment of the kingdom of God, which can only be done by the recognition and profession of the truth by every man" (Tolstoy 2005:190). Gandhi was a living example, who established the kingdom of God in the hearts of Indians, by being a relentless votary of truth, all through his life.

On a parting note, the malleability and timelessness of Gandhi's teachings, can be reckoned by the fact, that mainstream Hindi Film Industry also, could entice cinephiles with films based on the Gandhian ideology. The box office successes in the form of *Munna Bhai MBBS* (2003) and its sequel *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (2006) based on Gandhian thought stand testimony to this fact.

Interestingly, the pursuit of 'truth' has always been at the core of parallel cinema. The insistence on truth is taken to its extreme and most of the times, to its logical conclusion. This can be witnessed through films like *Aankhon Dekhi* (2013) which stars the versatile actor Sanjay Mishra, who essays the role of a middle-class individual and decides to believe 'only' in the version of 'truth' which he experiences first-hand. He pays dearly for this experiment, by losing his life, as a result of the insistence on this belief. He takes the idea to the extreme, by embarking on the experience of feeling the experience of 'flying', he sets out on the venture and reaches the ultimate destination of mortal beings; leaving the audience awestruck, with questions, groping for answers.

Notes:

1. Hindu mystic-Webb Miller, a long-time admirer of Thoreau and an American Journalist, referring Gandhi as one.

2. Tinkathia System: The Champaran tenant was bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as the tinkathia system, as three kathas out of twenty (which make one acre) had to be planted with indigo. (Gandhi 2017:364)

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