

CASE NO. 1917

INDIGO

The Anatomy of a Movement &
The Blueprint of Satyagraha

A forensic deconstruction of Mahatma Gandhi's
1917 Champaran campaign.

THE CATALYST: A PROFILE IN TENACITY



**ARCHIVAL
EVIDENCE**

PERSONNEL FILE: INDIVIDUAL DATA

SUBJECT: **Rajkumar Shukla**

STATUS: Poor and emaciated sharecropper from the Himalayan foothills.

ATTRIBUTES: Illiterate but resolute.

THE MISSION: Traveled to the Dec. 1916 Indian National Congress in Lucknow (among 2,301 delegates) solely to complain about landlord injustice.

MODUS OPERANDI: Shadowed Gandhi relentlessly. For weeks he never left Gandhi's side, begging him to "Fix a date."

VERIFIED RECORD - 1917

The Root of the Conflict: The 15% Economy



THE SPARK: THE SYNTHETIC DISRUPTION



The Catalyst:

Germany successfully develops synthetic indigo, rendering the natural Champaran crop commercially worthless.



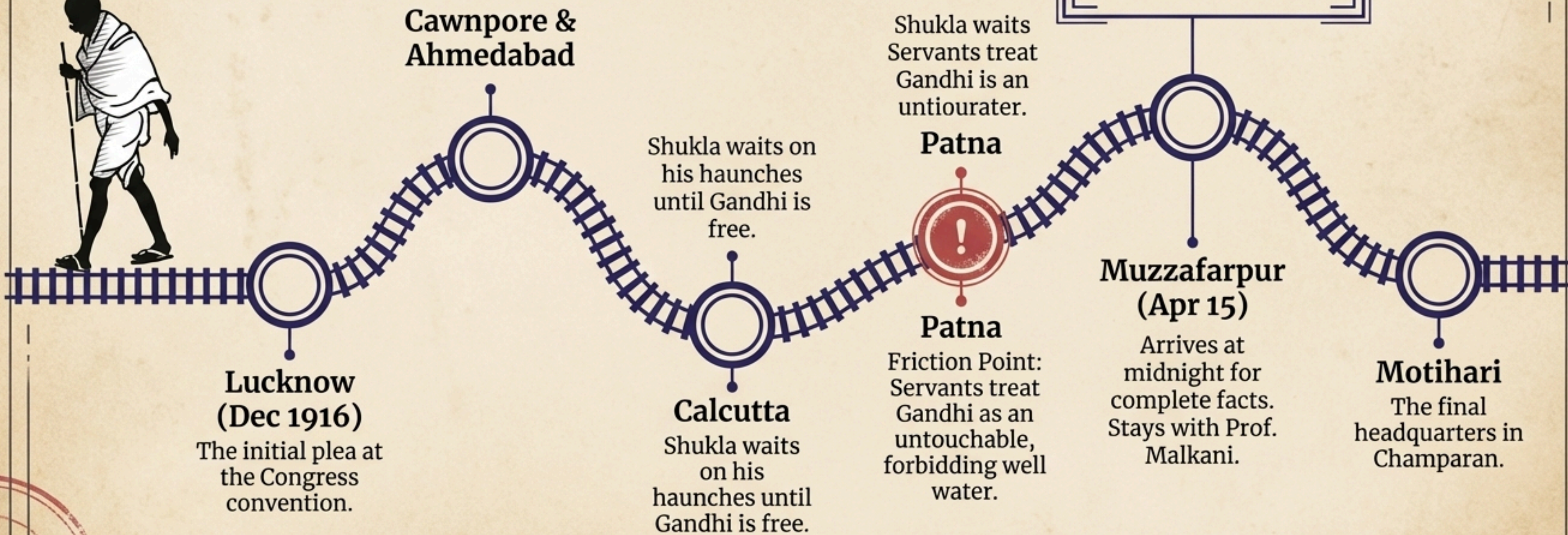
The Extortion Scheme:

- Landlords hide the synthetic indigo news.
- Demand financial compensation to release peasants from the 15% agreement.

The Fallout:

Illiterate peasants sign willingly. Those who resist are attacked by hired thugs. Truth leaks, and peasants demand money back.

The Investigation Begins: An Annotated Journey



Hitting the Institutional Wall

Evidence Board

File 1: British Landlord's Association

The Response: Secretary claims they can give “no information to an outsider.”

Gandhi's Counter: Declares he is “no outsider.”

File 2: British Official Commissioner (Tirhut)

The Response: The commissioner bullies Gandhi and advises him to “forthwith leave Tirhut.”

Gandhi's Counter: He does not leave. Proceeds directly to Motihari with several lawyers.

Key Takeaway: Fact-finding reveals the true enemy is not just unfair contracts, but a deeply entrenched system of intimidation.

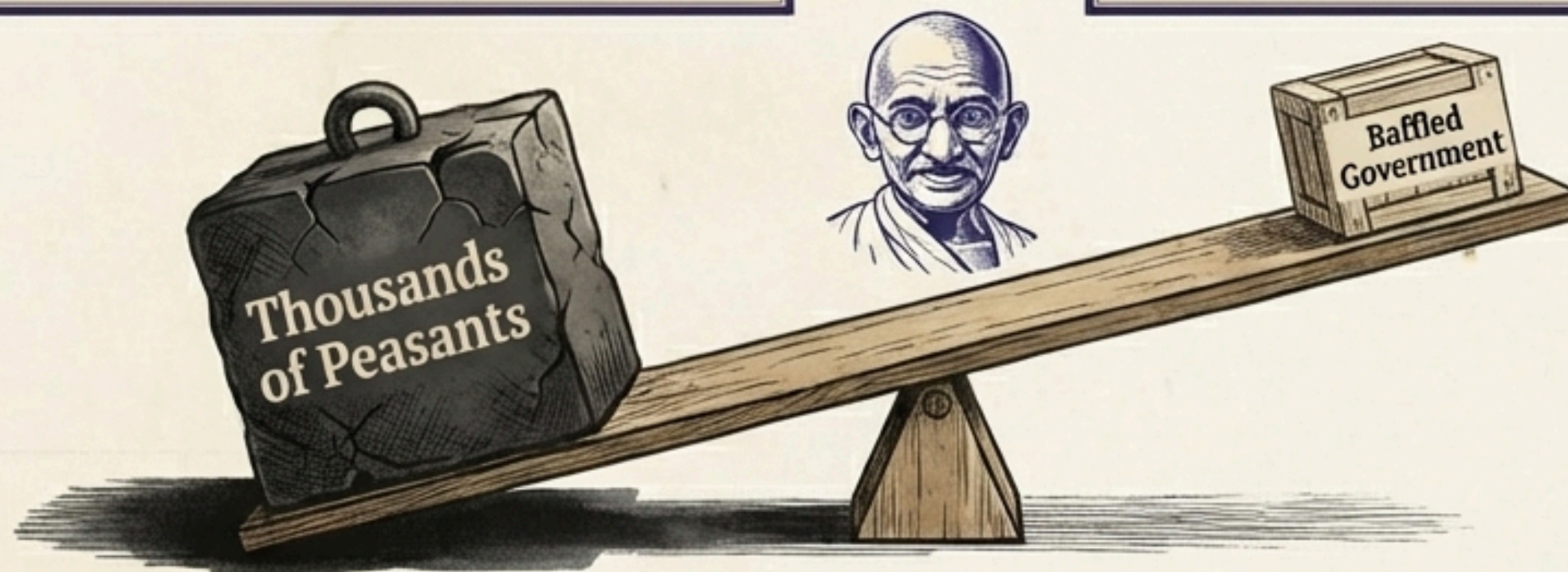
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- The Incident:** Gandhi rides an elephant to investigate a maltreated peasant.
- The Intercept:** The police superintendent's messenger forces him to return to town.
- The Notice:** Served an official order to “quit Champaran immediately.”
- The Consequence:** Summoned to court. Gandhi stays awake all night telegraphing the Viceroy, the ashram, and Rajendra Prasad.



The Turning Point: Shifting the Fulcrum

The Scene: Morning finds the town of Motihari 'black with peasants' coming to support their champion.

The Shift: The British officials feel entirely powerless. They must rely on Gandhi's cooperation to regulate the crowd.



The Impact: The spontaneous demonstration is the beginning of the peasants' liberation from fear of the British.

The Proof: Gandhi gives concrete proof that British might, hitherto dreaded and unquestioned, could be challenged.

The Courtroom Strategy: A Conflict of Duties

A

The Legal Duty

- The Obligation: To obey the official notice to quit the district.
- The Risk: Setting a bad example as a lawbreaker.
- The Stance: Pleading guilty to disregarding lawful authority.



B

The Moral Duty (The Higher Law)

- The Obligation: To render “humanitarian and national service.”
- The Driver: Obedience to the “voice of conscience.”
- The Stance: Accepting the penalty out of respect for this higher law.

The Result: The baffled judge refuses to deliver judgment, releasing Gandhi without bail.

Inspiring the Elite: The End of Desertion

Phase 1: Exploitation & Fear

- Lawyers collected big fees from crushed sharecroppers. Gandhi notes: “real relief is to be free from fear.”

Phase 2: The Hesitation

- If Gandhi goes to jail, the elite lawyers plan to simply pack up and go home.

Phase 3: The Epiphany

- They realize: If a total stranger is prepared to go to prison for the peasants, their own retreat would be “shameful desertion.”

Phase 4: The Commitment

- They tell Gandhi they are ready to follow him into jail.

**Gandhi's
Declaration:
“The battle of
Champaran is
won.”**

Scaling the Investigation: A Mountain of Evidence



THE VICTORY:

The Lieutenant-Governor drops the case. Civil disobedience triumphs for the first time in modern India.

THE MOBILIZATION:

Gandhi and the lawyers launch a far-flung inquiry into farmer grievances.

THE DATA:

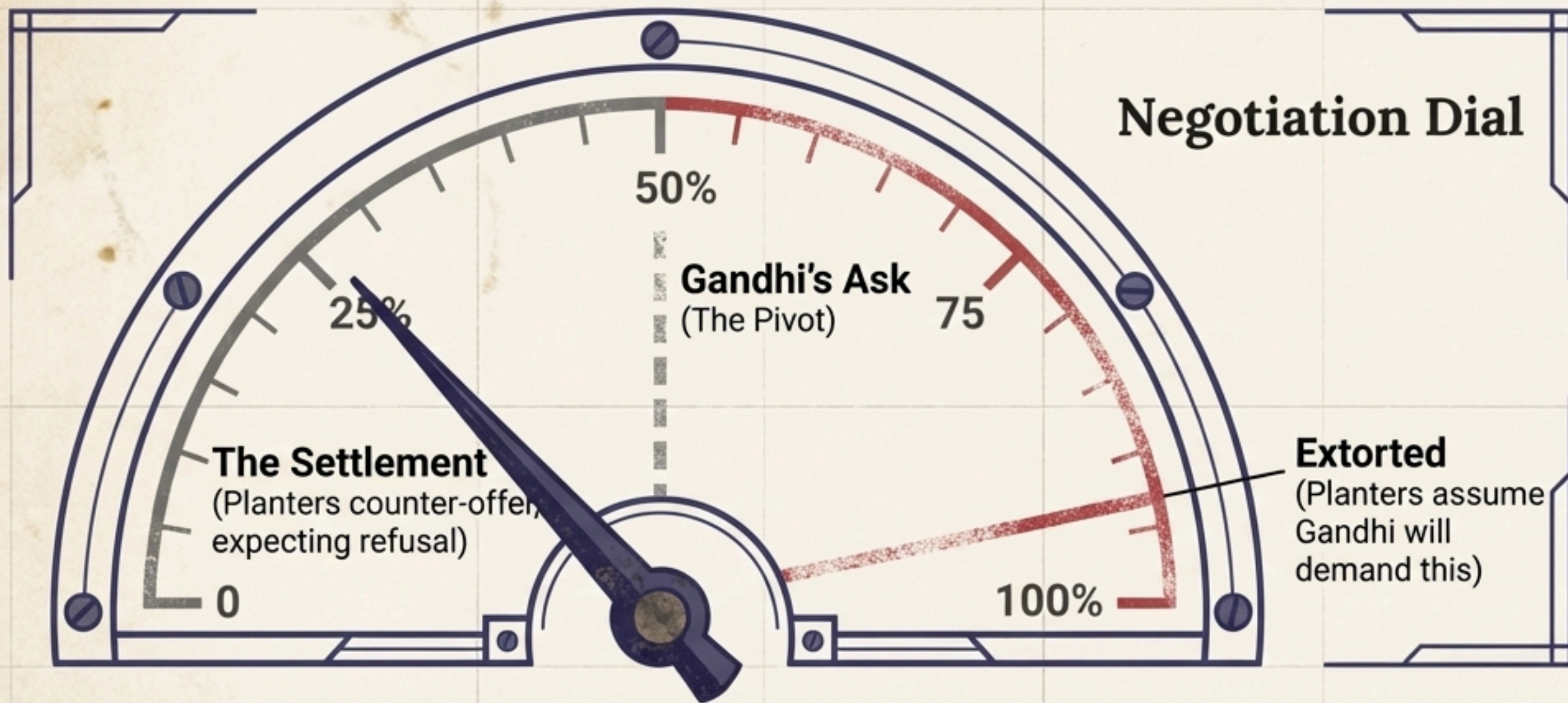
10,000+ peasant depositions written down. Documents systematically collected across the entire throbbing area.

THE CLIMAX:

An official commission of inquiry is appointed by Lt. Gov Sir Edward Gait. Gandhi is the sole representative of the peasants.



The Settlement: Breaking the Deadlock



The Masterstroke:
"To his amazement,
Mr. Gandhi took him
at his word."

The Underlying Logic

The refund amount was irrelevant. By forcing the landlords to surrender part of the money, they were forced to surrender part of their prestige. The peasants learned they had rights and defenders.

Beyond Politics: Healing the Roots

Gandhi never contented himself with large political solutions; he targeted daily, human problems immediately.

Social Upliftment Ledger

Pillar 1: Education & Sanitation

- Disciples (Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh, Devadas) and Mrs. Gandhi volunteer.
- Primary schools opened in 6 villages.
- Kasturbai teaches personal cleanliness and sanitation (addressing the reality of women with only one sari).

Pillar 2: Health Logistics

A doctor volunteers for 6 months with only three medicines:

Symptoms		Treatments
Coated Tongue	➔	Castor Oil
Malaria Fever	➔	Quinine + Castor Oil
Skin Eruptions	➔	Sulphur Ointment + Castor Oil

The Ultimate Lesson: Rejecting the 'Prop'

The Situation: English pacifist Charles Freer Andrews offers to stay. The Indian lawyers are eager for his help.

“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... You should not seek a prop in Mr. Andrews.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

The Realization: Rajendra Prasad notes, “He had read our minds correctly... Gandhi in this way taught us a lesson in self-reliance.”

The Insight: True equality cannot be achieved while leaning on the privilege of the oppressor.

Synthesis: The Anatomy of the Gandhian Method

A Free India:
Moulding 'a new free Indian
who could stand on his own feet'

Political Defiance:

Challenging
unquestioned British
might through
non-violent, lawful
disobedience.

Economic Justice:

Dismantling exploitative
systems (the 15% indigo
arrangement) and
shattering landlord
prestige.

Social Upliftment:

Grounding politics in
the practical, day-to-day
problems of millions
(schools, medicine,
sanitation).

Self-Reliance: Freedom from fear and the absolute rejection of external props.

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