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Q2(b)

Examine sociological dynamics of Champaran Peasant Movement in colonial India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 marks · Tribal communities in India

Tribal communities in India: Definitional problems; Geographical spread; Colonial policies and tribes; Issues of integration and autonomy.

Core demand of the question

- Examine sociological dynamics of Champaran Peasant Movement in colonial India
- Keep to a 15-mark length

Revision summary

Champaran was a 1917 peasant struggle against indigo compulsion in Bihar.

Planter estates and **tinkathia** formed the agrarian structure.

Local **peasant notables** and lawyers mediated caste and village power.

Gandhian satyagraha turned a local fight into a national method.

Indigo faded; agrarian class inequality in the region did not.

Introduction

The Champaran movement of 1917 was a peasant fight against indigo compulsion in north Bihar. Its sociological dynamics were agrarian class, caste leadership, and a new nationalist method. **Gandhi's** satyagraha did not invent the grievance. It organised a local structure into a public event.

Body

Agrarian structure

- **Tinkathia** and planter power tied small peasants to indigo on European estates, a colonial cash-crop regime **A. R. Desai** would read as extra-economic coercion plus market.
- Tenants, small occupancy holders, and labourers were not one class. The loudest voice was often the peasant who had some land to lose.
- Famine, price, and the First World War pressure made the estate order brittle.

Caste, village, and leadership

- Local educated men and **peasant notables** mediated. Dominant agrarian groups could speak as 'the peasantry'.
- Untouchable labour and women appear less in the canonical story, a silence later gender and Dalit sociology would mark.
- Village faction and honour shaped who could sit in **Gandhi's** inquiry.

Nationalist dynamics

- **Champaran trained a method:** inquiry, oath, and moral publicity, later reused beyond indigo.
- The movement linked qasba lawyers and rural tenants, a plurality inside nation building.
- Planters and the colonial state were the outside enemy, which unified ranks that class would later split.

Afterlife

- Indigo declined. Agrarian inequality in Bihar did not. Dynamics of leadership without a land revolution remained.

Flow diagram

Indigo tinkathia planters -> Peasant grievance
Local notables caste -> Peasant grievance
Satyagraha inquiry -> National event
Peasant grievance -> National event

Conclusion

Champaran's dynamics were a colonial plantation-peasant relation, mediated by local notables, and framed by satyagraha as national morality. Sociology should keep the peasants' compulsion at the centre, and not reduce the event to a biography of one leader.

Facts & figures

Tinkathia

System that forced a share of peasant land into indigo for planters.

1917 Champaran

Satyagraha and inquiry that publicised planter compulsion.

A. R. Desai

Would place the movement in a colonial agrarian class path, not only in moral history.

Peasant notables

Local leaders who could speak for tenants while poorer labour stayed quieter.