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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. The Champaran Satyagraha was the first intersection of peasant unrest and the national movement. Comment. (250 words)

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Approach

- Explain how Champaran Satyagraha was more inclusive as a mass movement than the previous movement.
- Explain the issues with the previous movements.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The Champaran satyagraha of 1917 opened a new phase in the national movement by joining it to the great struggle of the Indian peasantry for bread and land. Agrarian issues rarely formed the part of the political discourse earlier. However, Gandhiji led the struggle of indigo workers as India's first satyagraha that set the pace for inclusion of peasant struggles to the national movement.

Body

- The early freedom fighters, earlier moderates and later extremists focused exclusively on political question of freedom struggle.
- The movement was mostly motivated by and catered to the certain intelligentsia, educated, the urban middle class only and asked for certain concessions from British government like an increased representation of Indians in government, freedom of press, through tools like sending representatives, petitions etc.
- The masses were neither involved in the struggle nor were their problems addressed.
- The Champaran movement was the first Satyagraha, taken up by Gandhiji in India, to free indigo workers from excesses of indigo planters under tinkathia system who were trying to exploit peasants by increasing rent after falling of indigo prices due to coming of synthetic dyes.
- Gandhiji spearheaded the movement non-violently and through political means, thus exposing peasants to political tools of struggle and paving the way for such other struggles.

Conclusion

It proved to be a watershed in the Indian freedom struggle by bringing peasants directly in its fold on one hand through the formation of Kisan Sabhas and inspiring future peasant movements based on political agitation on the other (Kheda, Bardoloi etc.) The freedom struggle from hereon became truly Indian by the inclusion of masses.