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Notes of Bipan Chandra's India's Struggle for Freedom

Chapter 3. Peasant Movements and Uprisings after 1857

Structure of the notes and how to best use them



This is the notes of the third chapter of Bipan Chandra's India's Struggle of Freedom .
The Structure of the notes and how to best use them is explained below . We will come up with more such notes . To get it in your email , please register your email on our website (www.notesforias.com) .

Each Chapter of Bipan Chandra's Book is divided into sections which are separated by star marks (*). We refer to these sections as "Plates" in these notes .

Read each section from the Bipan Chandra's Book .

Read the section from main notes

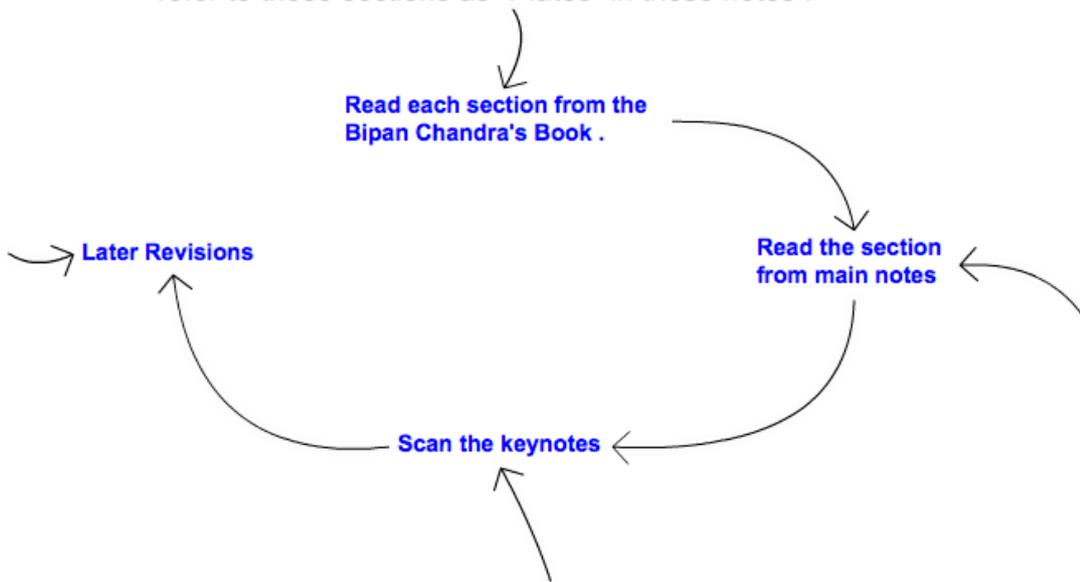
Main notes contain the complete summary of each of the sections .

Later Revisions

Scan the keynotes

Keynotes contain the bare outline of the sections and intended to help you remember the most important keywords that can be used to frame your mains answers . Factsheet is just for data that should be memorised for PT .

When revising later , try to read the keynotes first and try to recall the complete ideas in the notes . Only then refer to main notes .



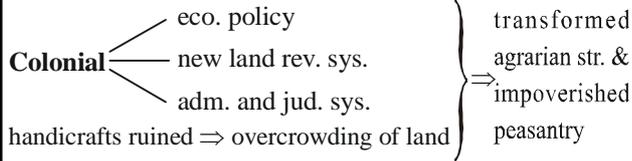


3. Peasant movements and uprisings after 1857

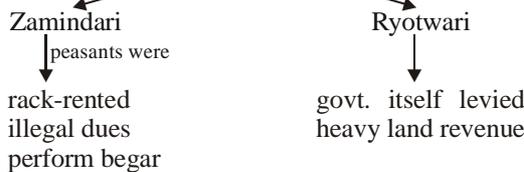
Plates (1 - 2D) : Main Notes.

PLATE - 1

Colonial exploitation of Indian peasants



systems



Effects

- borrow money from moneylenders.
- actual cultivators $\xrightarrow{\text{Turned to}}$ tenants-at-will, share croppers, landless labourers.
- lands, crops, cattle $\xrightarrow{\text{passed to}}$ landlords, money lenders, rich peasants, traders.

Resistance

- Behind indigenous exploiter - main exploiter was the colonial state
- when collective action not possible - some took to crime (robbery, dacoity-"social banditry") - in preference to starvation and social degradation

PLATE - 2A

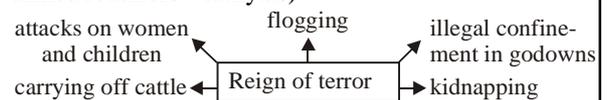
Indigo revolt (most militant and wide spread p. movement)

The problem

Indigo planters (mostly Europeans) – forced tenants to grow indigo – later processed in mofussil (rural) areas.

Extremely oppressive system

- peasants forced to take – a meager sum as advance – enter fraudulent contracts – couldn't pay back or forced not to pay back – used to compel him to go on cultivating indigo.
- price paid << market price – even the low price was not paid eventually
- forced to grow it on their best land in lieu of more price paying crops (like rice)
- Enforcement of fraud contracts (by courts) – a long process – so, planters resorted to a reign of terror (using armed retainers – lathiyals)



- looting, burning, demolition of houses, crops, trees
- Magistrates (mostly European) – favoured the planters – (dined, hunted together) ⇒ planters above the law. (exceptional magistrates – transferred)
- “Je rakhak se bhakak” – when 29 planters and an Indian zamindar – made Hon. Magistrates (1857).

PLATE - 2B

Beginning of resistance

- DM (Kalaroa) Hem Chandra Kar – misread an official letter – proclaim to police: in case of dispute, ryots to retain their land – sow what they please – no one else should interfere in the matter – News spread – time to throw the hated sys. Peasants – sent petitions; organized peaceful demonstrations. Sep' 1859 – asserted right not to grow Indigo – resisted physical pressure by planters, lathiyals, police.
- beginning at – Nadia district – Govindpur village – leaders: Digambar and Bishnu Biswas. 100 lathiyals sent by planter – ryots fought back with lathis and spears.
- soon spread – other areas – refused advances and contracts – pledge not to sow indigo – defended with whatever weapons available (spears, lathis, slings, bows, bricks, bhel-fruit, earthen-pots thrown by women).
- spring, 1860 – flared again – all indigo district - factories attacked – villages defended themselves. Police intervention – met with counterattack on police.

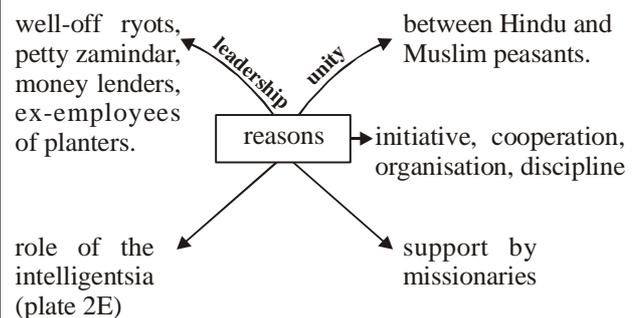
PLATE - 2C

The last resort

- planters – attacked with zamindari powers – threaten with eviction/rent ↑↑. Ryots replied – physically evade eviction / refuse to pay rent.
- ryots – raised funds – fight court cases – initiate legal action.
- social boycott – to make planters' servants leave ⇒ ultimately planters closed factories. Indigo cultivation wiped out in district of Bengal by 1860.

PLATE - 2D

Reasons for success of Indigo revolt





3. Peasant movements and uprisings after 1857

Plates (1 - 2D) : Key notes and fact sheet

KEY NOTES

Plate - 1

Colonial exploitation of Indian peasants

- Impoverished peasantry $\xrightarrow[\text{to}]{\text{due}}$ colonial eco. policies and sys (land, adm, jud)
- Systems
 - zamindari (rack-rent; illegal dues; begar)
 - Ryotwari (heavy land revenue by govt.)
- Effects → money from money lenders.
 - cultivators turned to tenants – at will, share croppers, landless.
 - lands, crop, cattle – taken away by colonial system.
- Resistance against – colonial state.
- Some took to crime (“Social Banditry”)

Plate - 2A (Indigo revolt)

- Indigo planters – forced indigo plantation
 - oppressive “advance”
 - price < market price
 - in lieu of more paying crops.
- ↓
- Reign of terror using lathiyals
 - flog
 - kidnap
 - Attack women/children; carry cattle
 - loot, burn, demolish (house, crops, trees)
- Magistrates
 - favoured planters
 - or transferred
- “Je rakhak se bhakak”

Plate - 2B (The Resistance)

- proclamation of Kar-favour ryots (retain land; sow as please) $\xrightarrow{\text{then}}$ peasants – sent petitions, peaceful demo, vowed for no indigo, resist physical pressure.
- Beginning at Govindpur – Ryots fight back – 100 lathiyals of planters.
- Refuse advances and contracts. Defended with whatever weapons available.
- Spring 1860 – flared across all indigo district – factories attacked – villages defended. Police was attacked if intervened.

Plate – 2C

- planters – threaten with zamindari powers to evict / rent ↑↑ - resisted by ryots.
- ryots – raise funds – fight court cases.
- social boycott of planters’ servants.
- indigo culti. wiped out by 1860.

Plate – 2D (Reasons for Success)

- discipline, cooperation, org, initiative.
- support by
 - missionaries
 - intelligentsia
- Hindu-Muslim unity.
- leadership by ex-employees of planters, etc.

FACT SHEET

- Period of Indigo revolt : 1859-60
- DM of Kalaroa: Hem Chandra Kar
- Govindpur (Nadia) – leaders : Digambar Biswas and Bishnu Biswas.



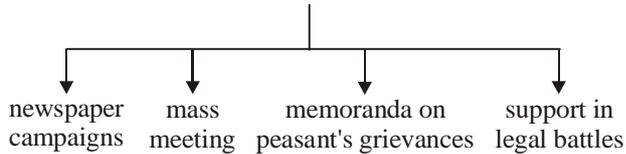
3. Peasant movements and uprisings after 1857

Plates (2E - 3) : Main notes.

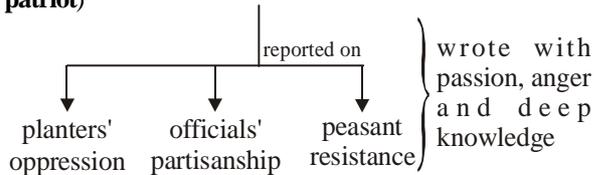
PLATE - 2E

Role of intelligentsia in Indigo revolt

- Organized powerful **campaign** for peasants



- Specifically: **Harish Chandra Mukherji** (ed: **Hindoo patriot**)

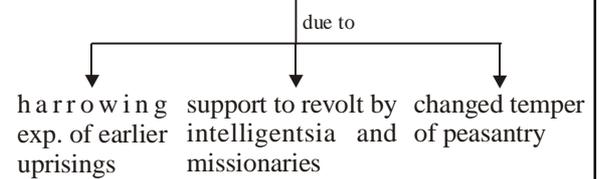


- Vivid portrayal of oppression by planters: **Neel Darpan** (A play by **Din Bandhu Mitra**).
- Role of intellectuals against foreign planters for a popular movement – established tradition with long run implications for the national movement

PLATE - 2F

Govt's response

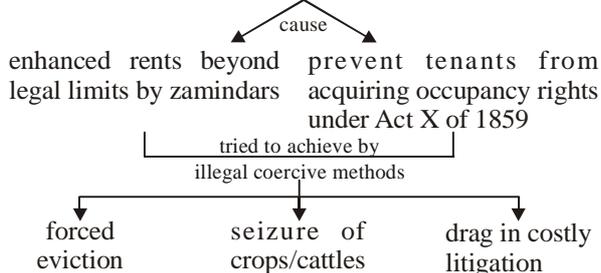
- Rather restrained (compared to earlier uprisings like santhals and 1857, etc).



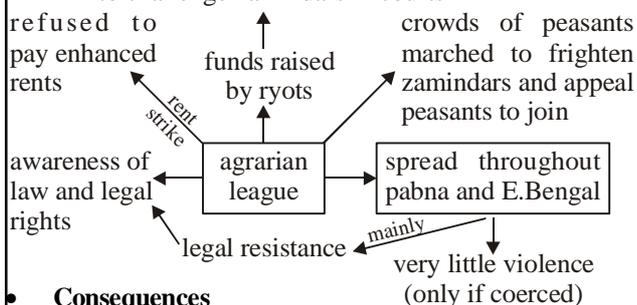
- Action: **commission appointed**
 - found **corruption and coercion in indigo cultivation**
 - mitigation of abuses
- notification - no compelling to sow indigo.
- all disputes - by legal means.
- But planters - closed factories - without advantage of "force and fraud"

PLATE - 3

Agrarian unrest in East Bengal (1870s and early 1880s)



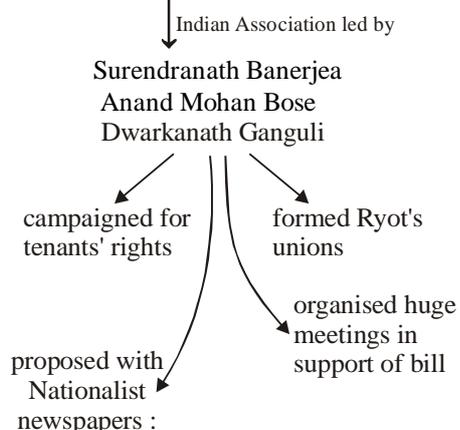
- Response by peasants**
May' 1873 (in Yusufshahi Parganah of Pabna distt.) - agrarian league formed to resist demands of zamindars. to challenge zamindars in courts



- Consequences**
 - disputes settled $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{under official pressure} \\ \text{or} \\ \text{out of zamindar's fear of costly litigation} \end{array} \right.$
 - Many peasants $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{acquired occupancy rights} \\ \text{resist enhanced rents} \end{array} \right.$
 - legislation to protect tenants (Bengal tenancy Act) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{promise} \\ \text{neutral in} \end{array} \right.$ **Govt's role** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{defend zamindars} \\ \text{only in case of} \\ \text{violence} \end{array} \right.$
 - legal battles
 - peaceful agitations

Nature of resistance

- AIM was restricted to → redressal of immediate grievances and enforcement of existing legal rights and norms.
- MEANS used were within the bounds of law.
- Did not aim the zamindari system or British rule - due to this the official action - based on IPC and not armed repression.
- Complete Hindu - Muslim solidarity
- Intellectuals' role**
Bankim Chandra Chatterjea } supported the cause
R.C.Dutt }
- Bengal Tenancy Bill (early 1880s)



- permanent fixation of rent.
- argued that right of occupancy should go with actual cultivators-because occupancy with non-cultivators would lead to growth of middlemen (jotedars) - who would be oppressive too.



3. Peasant movements and uprisings after 1857

Plates (2E - 3) : Key notes and factsheet

KEY NOTES

Plate - 2E (Role of Intelligentsia in Indigo Revolt)

- organised **powerful campaigns** (newspaper; meetings; memorandum; legal battle support)
- reports of **Harish Chandra Mukherji** on oppression and resistance.
- established tradition** - with implications for the eventual national movement

Plate - 2F (Govt's Response)

- Restrained response** - due to harrowing experience of earlier uprisings - support by intelligentsia - changed tempers of peasantry

- Appointed commission** → which → found corruption → led to → non-compulsion to sow
disputes by legal means

- Planters - **closed factories**

Plate - 3 (Agrarian unrest in East Bengal)

- cause** - enhanced rents and prevention of occupancy rights → by → eviction
seizure (crops)
litigation

- peasants formed **agrarian leagues** → legal resistance (collective funds)
→ refused to pay enhanced rents
→ crowds marched to scare zamindars and appeal others to join

- Consequences :** disputes settled under official pressure/fear of costly litigation

: many peasants → acquired occupancy rights
resist enhanced rents

- Govt's role** - neutral in legal battles/peaceful agitations (defended zamindars only in case of violence) - promised legislation to protect tenants.

- Nature** - aimed at redressal of immediate grievances **by legal means** and avoid violence - didn't go against zamindari system/British rule - so, official action was restrained (I.P.C. only).

Complete **Hindu-Muslim solidarity**.

- Intellectual's role** : supported the cause and Indian association for Bengal Tenancy Bill campaigned for tenant's rights, formed Ryot's unions and meeting to support the bill - proposed permanent fixation of rent and right of occupancy with actual cultivators to avoid middlemen (jotedars)

FACT SHEET

- Editor of Hindoo Patriot - Harish Chandra Mukherji
- Neel Darpan : Play by Din Bandhu Mitra portraying the oppression by Indigo planters.
- Occupancy rights under : Act X of 1859.
- First agrarian league formed in - Yusufshahi Parganah (Pabna)
- majority of ryots : Muslims .
majority of zamindars : Hindus

- Intellectuals supporting the cause :
Bankim Chandra Chatterjea
R.C.Dutt
Surendranath Banerjea } led the Indian Association on Rent Bill
Anand Mohan Bose
Dwarkanath Ganguli



3. Peasant movements and uprisings after 1857

Plates (4 - 6A) : Main Notes.

PLATE - 4A

Agrarian outbreak in Poona and Ahmednagar (1875)

[Ryotwari system - land revenue directly settled with peasants (owners) - generally paid, borrowing from money lenders - slowly lost their lands]

→ Tensions between peasants and outsider (Marwari/ Gujarati) money lenders.

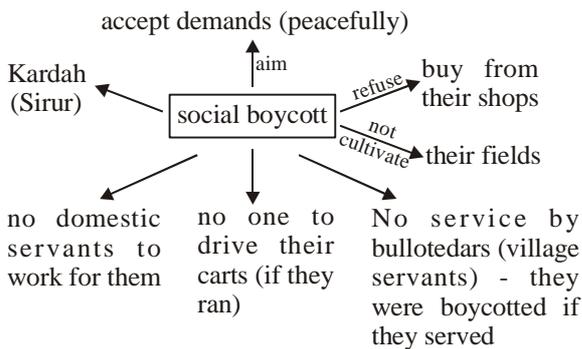
→ 3 other developments → series of bad harvests

American civil war (1860) led to cotton export and rise in price - but as it ended (1864) - prices crashed

↑↑ in land revenue by 50% (1867)

⇒ These led peasants to be more dependent on money lender who tightened grip on the lands - this led to a protest movement:

When a money lender (kalooram) was not convinced by peasants in pulling down a peasant's house (by a court decree), they organised a social boycott of money lenders:



spread to : poona, Ahmednagar, sholapur, satara

PLATE - 4B

Social boycott - not very effective ⇒ so, turned into agrarian riots - start at Supa (Bhimtari Taluq) - peasants attacked money lenders' houses / shops - seized and burnt all debt related documents - spread soon to other villages of Poona / Ahmednagar - continued for 3 weeks.

Nature

- Almost no violence - only seize documents
- More a demonstration of popular feeling and unity and strength

Govt's response

- Acted swiftly and repressed the movement quickly.
- No anti - colonial consciousness - so, govt. offered protection using Deccan Agriculturist's Relief Act, 1879.

Role of intelligentsia

- Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (led by Justice Ranade) - organise campaign against land revenue settlement of 1867 - led to peasants not paying enhanced revenue - contributed to the rise of protest in 1875.

PLATE - 5

raised Ramosi peasant force (≈ 50) → social banditry

Vasudev Balwant Phadke (educated clerk)

1879 Maharashtra

other peasant resistances

Assam 1893-94

High land revenue assessment

led to series of peasant riots

many killed in retaliation

Mappila outbreaks

crushed when 49 rebels blown by cannon (1872)

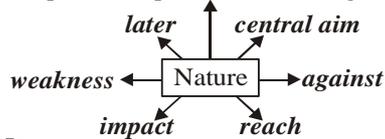
Kuka revolt (led by Baba Ram Singh)

Punjab

PLATE - 6A

Different nature of Peasant movements after 1857

main force : peasants (princes etc. having been crushed)



against : immediate enemies (foreign planters, zamindars, money lenders) - **not** colonial administration/system

central aim : spontaneous response to excessive and unbearable exploitation. Aimed at particular grievances; almost all economic.

reach : local (no linkages between different peasant movements) - but, locally showed courage and sacrifice; organisational ability; beyond caste/religious barriers.

weaknesses : lacked long-term vision of a struggle - once, particular grievances were addressed, the organisation and solidarity vanished.

- lacked an understanding of colonial structure, social framework of movements themselves and no social, economic and political program based on new colonial society.
 - Struggle was within framework of old societal order.
 - lacked positive conception of an alternative society to give direction to long term movements.
 - So, it was easier for a not so threatened colonial state to give some concessions on one hand and suppress as needed on the other.
 - So, a need for a new modern intelligentsia existed.
- (continued in the keynotes sheet for this section....)



3. Peasant movements and uprisings after 1857

Plates 6B : Main notes and plates (4-6B) : Key notes and factsheet

PLATE - 6B

- Impact :**
- fought against eviction and enhanced rent (not for land ownership or against land lordism) or enhanced tax.
 - Willing to pay interest (but fought against fraud and depriving of land by money lender)
 - No objection to foreign planter becoming zamindar (but against curbing of freedom to decide what to sow and unfair prices).
 - developed and used awareness of legal rights believing that the legally constituted authority approved of his actions.
- If deprived of legal rights by extra-legal means, he countered using his own extra-legal means.
 - Colonial state-not directly threatened (unlike 1857) - so, they gave concessions to peasants but within limits of colonial structure.
- Later :** (20th century) - peasant discontent was made a part of larger anti-imperialist movement - strengthening the peasant's movements and creating more powerful struggles and creating modern peasant organisations.

KEY NOTES

Plate 4A (Agrarian outbreak - Poona and Ahmednagar) - 1875

- Peasants - under Ryotwari system - borrowed from money lenders - lost their land ⇒ tensions.
 - 3 other developments - bad harvests / 50% ↑↑ in land revenue/cotton price crash after American civil war.
- ⇒ led to peasants - more dependent on money lender.
- **Social boycott** of moneylenders (when a peasant's house pulled down in Kardah; Sirur)
- └─→ No buying from their shops/not cultivate their fields/no service by bulletedars, cart drivers, domestic servants.

Plate - 4B

- When social boycott not effective ⇒ agrarian riots - seizing and barring of all debt related documents (3weeks) - no violence/demonstration of feeling, unity and strength.
- Govt. suppressed it quickly but gave relief and passed D.A.R. Act, 1879.
- Poona Sarvajanik Sabha - Campaign against land revenue settlement of 1867 - contributed to the rise of 1875. (Also Sabha and some papers supported the D.A.R. bill).

Plate - 5 (other peasant resistances)

- Malabar : Mappila outbreaks
- Assam : Riots due to high land revenue assessment
- Maharashtra : Social banditry by a Ramosi peasant force raised by Vasudev Balwant Phadke.

Plate - 6A (peasant movement after 1857)

- **against** : immediate enemies / not British.
 - **Central aim** : particular economic grievances.
 - **reach** : local
 - **weaknesses**
- no long term vision
→ no understanding of colonial structure.
→ state not threatened ⇒ so, gave reprieve but also suppressed.
⇒ Need for a new intelligentsia

Plate - 6B

Impact

- fight against eviction and enhanced rent/tax; against fraud by money lender .
- against "force to sow" and unfair prices.
- developed and used - awareness of legal rights.
- got concessions from colonial state.

Later

Peasant discontent made stronger and more organised as part of anti-imperialist movement

FACT SHEET

- Agrarian outbreak of Poona/Ahmednagar started at : Kardah village (Sirur Taluq) - Dec' 1874
- bulletedars (village servants) : barbers, washermen, carpenters, ironsmiths, shoemakers.
- Social boycott turned into agrarian riots at Supa (Bhimentari taluq) on 12/5/1875.
- DAR : Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act' 1879
- Poona sarvajanik sabha $\xrightarrow{\text{led by}}$ Justice Ranade
- Malabar : Mappila outbreaks.
- Social banditry in Maharashtra - led by Vasudev Balwant Phadke.
- Kuka revolt in Punjab - led by - Baba Ram Singh