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SECTION : 22

Critical assessment of Indigo Rebellion

Bengal saw the Indigo Rebellion (also known as Neel Bidroho), which was an uprising by farmers against British planters who had made them grow indigo under conditions that were very unfavorable to them. The rebellion continued from 1859 to 1860 in Bengal, after having suffocated since 1777. This action includes individuals from various backgrounds farmers, missionaries, bengali muslims and intellectuals.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The British cotton-textile sector experienced significant growth throughout the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. The availability of indigo from the Americas decreased in the late 18th century. As a result, in Bengal and Bihar, two of the British East India Company's strongholds in eastern India, the indigo industry grew profitably. Indigo was grown by Indian peasant farmers, and the planters' factories turned it into dye. After that, the dye was shipped to Europe. Intimidating was the British indigo business.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The majority of Bengal's indigo was grown using the Ryoti farming method. Ryots, or farmers would be forced to sign a contract by British planters promising to grow indigo on a specific plot of the farmer's land. The land did not belong to the farmers. As an alternative, they rented it from the planters or from zamindars. The zamindars in turn gave the British government a portion of the money they received. The farmer received a financial advance loan from the indigo planter to help with land rent or other expenses, which required interest to be paid back. Traditionally, the accounts were drawn up at the conclusion of the manufacturing season. The debt consists of the price of the advance, the price of the stamp paper and the price of seeds. The worth of the bundles of indigo plants was 4 to 8 bundles per rupee which was included in the credit. If he had an excess or "fazil" in his credit, he was paid. If not, he faced a debt accusation. He was given a new advance for the following year even though he was in debt. However, the debt was subtracted from the advance's entire amount.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The loan was the main reason Indian farmers refused to cultivate indigo. Furthermore, the British planters paid their employees only 2.5% of the market price, underpaying them (Rajput, D.S., 2020). On the other hand land deterioration was hampering the growth of the cultivation, which led to the Indigo Rebellion. A farmer who took on such obligations would be saddled with it for the rest of his life and then leave it to his heirs. The British planters would, abduct or attack a peasant's wife and children if they refused to grow indigo. After watching the hardship of the farmers, Dinbandhu Mitra wrote a play titled "Nil Dorpon," which the British administration later outlawed because it was inciting the farmers to rebel against them. The uprising began in the Nadia district in 1859 and extended throughout Bengal's districts in the 1860s. With spears and swords, the peasants attacked the indigo manufacturers. Planters were thrashed for making debt demands. Even women joined in the struggle by using pots and pans. In the Pabna area, where the ryots adamantly refused to sow indigo, it was particularly potent. In the Indigo Rebellion, peasants of the movement were headed by Biswas brothers of Nadia, Rafiq Mondal of Malda and Kader Molla of Pabna.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. BYJU’S Exam Prep. (n.d.). Peasant

   Movements in 19 th Century – Indigo

   https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/peasant-movements-in-19th-century-indigo-rebellion/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. en.banglapedia.org. (n.d.).(1 Augast,2021) Indigo Resistance Movement – Banglapedia https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Indigo\_Resistance\_Movement [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. INDIAN CULTURE, n.d. https://indianculture.gov.in/stories/indigo-revolt-bengal [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. (Britannica Kids, n.d.) https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Indigo-Revolt/623607 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)