



## Mains Practice Quesstions

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**Q.** Discuss the reasons for Indigo Revolt and role of ryots and intelligentsia in its success. (250 words)

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### Approach

- Discuss the socio-economic conditions that led to Indigo Revolt
- Bring out the role of ryots and intelligentsia during the revolt

### Introduction

Indigo, as the natural dye for textiles, emerged as one of the most important cash crops for British traders in late 18th & first half of 19th century. The resultant greed of British planters who depended on plantations in Bengal for their supplies and the complicity of the colonial state in the subsequent exploitation gave birth to the reasons behind Indigo revolt.

### Body

#### Features of Indigo cultivation system

- In the Ryoti system of Indigo plantation, the peasants were forced to cultivate indigo on 4 major part of their fields.
- The ryots were made to enter contracts for compulsory Indigo cultivation which was then purchased at rates much lower than the market rates.
- The planters also acted hand-in-glove with the (mostly) European magistrates, thinning the chances of any legal respite from fraudulent & exploitative contracts via legal means.
- The hesitant or dissenting peasants were subjected to various kinds of torture and extra-legal force by planters till they gave in.

Such conditions led to the resistance by Indigo-cultivators in Bengal in 1859 which was termed as Indigo revolt.

In this revolt, **ryots adopted the following course of action:**

- They asserted their rights to not grow Indigo under duress and resisted the physical pressure of planters by their united and collective efforts.
- The peasants refused to take advances (called dadon) which were offered at high interest rates by planters to coerce peasants into contracts.
- As the resistance spread, Indigo factories were attacked and aggressive defence was organized to meet the challenges of use of force by planters and the police.
- Ryots also refused to pay rents to Zamindars and physically resisted attempts to evict them.
- Joint funds were raised to fight court cases and also to undertake legal action in courts.

- The tactic of social boycott was used to force planters servants and helpers to leave them.

### **Intelligentsia of Bengal also chipped in following ways:**

- Newspapers like the '**Hindoo Patriot**' under **Harish Chandra Mukherjee** and reports of journalists like **Sisir Kumar Ghosh** publicised and defended the cause of peasants while exposing the exploitation of Indigo planters.
- Artists also publicised the plight of Indigo cultivators and took their case far and wise. A case in point was **Din Bandhu Mitra's play – 'Neel Darpan'** which attained great fame.
- **Missionaries** also reacted positively towards peasants demands and raised their voice in support.

### **Conclusion**

So, the above identified role played by ryots and intelligentsia coupled with unity among Hindu & Muslim peasants, leadership by well-off ryots & even a few zamindars, resulting in a overall broad social base of Indigo revolt forced the colonial government to appoint an indigo commission. It notified against the prevalent exploitative practices in Indigo-plantation resulting in the success of the movement.