



Crop for Europe: The British also realized that the countryside could not only yield revenue, it could also grow the crops that Europe required. By the late eighteenth century the company was trying its best to expand the cultivation of opium and indigo. In the century and a half that followed the British persuaded or forced cultivators in various parts of India to produce other crops: jute in Bengal, tea in Assam, sugarcane in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), wheat in Punjab, cotton in Maharashtra and Punjab, rice in Madras.

Industrialisation in India in the 19th century: The British government's attitude to industrial development in India was lukewarm. It did not establish heavy industries in India as they would become competitors to British industries. However, (the Revolt of 1857 and the growing national movement in India put pressure on the British to do something about the dying industries of India. The commission strongly recommended the setting up of factories in India as this would reduce pressure on agriculture. The Swadeshi Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi, which stressed the need to develop indigenous industries, also gave a boost to the industrialization of India.

The Beginning of Modern Indian Industry: Large-scale industries required large-scale movement of raw materials and finished products. For this, modern and efficient means of transport and communication were needed. India lacked both. So the British started building roads and railways across the country, linking the places which were sources of raw materials with the places of manufacture and the places of consumption. Steam navigation along the rivers was developed. Post and telegraph were introduced to speed up communication. British money was largely invested in factories and mines. British investors built jute factories in Calcutta and cotton mills in Kanpur. This was followed by metal works, coal mines and oil wells. When World War I broke out in 1914, Britain was importing part of its steel requirements from India. It realised the need to develop industries in India to supplement factories in Britain manufacturing military equipments. Moreover it was becoming difficult to get their essential supplies from England due to the war. So the British were forced to start factories in India.

The country's first large-scale industries were set up in the middle of the 19th century with Bombay being the centre.

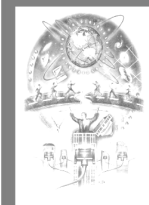
Cotton Textiles: Indian merchants started building cotton mills in Bombay and the surrounding areas by the middle of the 19th century. The first cotton mill was set up in Bombay in 1854 by Cowasjee Nanabhai. The next one came up in Ahmadabad in 1861. Ahmadabad soon became the second most important centre for textiles, closely followed by Madras. By the end of the 19th century, British capitalists opened many more cotton mills in places like Kanpur, Sholapur and Nagpur. But these mills had to face stiff competition from British mills, which had the support of the British government.

The Jute Industry: The jute mills were centered around Calcutta mainly because of the availability of raw materials. The first jute mill in Bengal started in 1855. The number of mills grew slowly to 64 by World War I.

Coal Mining

In the 1850s, the British started building railway lines in India. The steam engines that pulled the trains were powered by coal. Coal was also needed by the iron and





steel industry. As the need for coal grew, coal mines were opened in Bengal, Odisha and Bihar, which had rich seams of coal.

The Sugar Industry: Till the coming of the British, sugar-making in India was a cottage industry. But the huge demand for sugar from Europe led to the large-scale production of refined sugar in factories in Europe. The need to start the production of sugar locally in India was soon felt. Sugar factories were concentrated in Maharashtra because of the availability of sugarcane.

The Iron and Steel Industry: Iron and steel is one of the most important and basic industries of a modern economy. The iron and steel industry in India started on a modest scale. But it soon grew by leaps and bounds. In 1907, the Tata Iron and Steel Company was founded by the visionary Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand. This was the first Indian-owned steel producing unit in India.

Indigo: An important dye for the textile industry, indigo was cultivated on a large scale by the British colonists. Indian peasants were forced to work in indigo plantations under inhuman conditions.

The Plantation Industry: A plantation is a place where cash crops are grown on a large scale. You have already seen how Indian farmers were forced to cultivate cash crops in the place of food grains. Indigo, tea, jute, rubber and cotton, were some of the cash crops grown.

How was Indigo cultivated? There were two main systems of indigo cultivation - *nij* and *Ryoti*. Within the system of *nij* cultivation, the planter produced indigo in lands that he directly controlled. He either bought the land or rented it from other zamindars and produced indigo by directly employing hired laborers.

The problem with *nij* cultivation: The planters found it difficult to expand the area under *nij* cultivation. Indigo could be cultivated only on fertile lands, and these were all already densely populated. Only small plots scattered over the landscape could be blocked to cultivate indigo in a plantation. They attempted to lease in the land around the indigo factory, and evict the peasants from the area. But this always led to conflicts and tension. Nor was labour easy to mobilize. A large plantation required a vast number of hands to operate. And labour was needed precisely at a time when peasants were usually busy with their rice cultivation.

Nij cultivation on a large scale also required many ploughs and bullocks. One bigha of indigo cultivation required two ploughs. This meant that a planter with 1000 bighas would need 2000 ploughs. Investing on purchase and maintenance of ploughs was a big problem. Nor could supplies be easily got from the peasants' since their ploughs and bullocks were busy on their rice fields, again exactly at the time that the indigo planters needed them.

Till the late nineteenth century, planters were therefore reluctant to expand the area under *nij* cultivation. Less than 25% of the land producing indigo was under this system, the rest was under an alternative mode of cultivation - the *ryoti* system.

Indigo on the land of *Ryots*: Under the *ryoti* system, the planters forced the *ryoti* to sign a contract, an agreement (*satta*). At times they pressurized the village headmen to sign the contract on behalf of the *Ryots*. Those who sign the contract got cash advances from the planters at low rates of interest to produce Indigo. But the loan committed the *ryot* to cultivation of indigo on at least 25 % of the area



under his holding. The planter provided the seed and the drill, while the cultivators prepared the soil, sowed the seed and looked after the crop. When the crop was delivered to the planter after the harvest, a new loan was given to the ryot, and the cycle started all over again, peasants who were initially tempted by the loan soon realized how harsh the system was. The price they got for the indigo they produced was very low and the cycle of loans never ended. There were other problems too. The planters usually insisted that indigo be cultivated on the best soils in which peasants preferred to cultivate rice. Indigo, moreover, had deep roots and it exhausted the soil rapidly. After an indigo harvest the land could not be sown with rice.

The British used a variety of methods to expand the cultivation of crops that they needed: Faced with the rising demand for indigo in Europe, the Company in India looked for ways to expand the area under indigo cultivation. From the last decades of the eighteenth century indigo cultivation in Bengal expanded rapidly and Bengal indigo came to dominate the world market. In 1788 only about 30 % of the indigo imported into Britain was from India. By 1810, the proportion had gone up to 95%. As the indigo trade grew, commercial agents and officials of the Company began investing in indigo production. Over the years many Company officials left their jobs to look after their indigo business. Attracted by the prospect of high profits, numerous Scotsmen and Englishmen came to India and became planters. Those who had no money to produce indigo could get loans from the Company and the banks that were coming up at the time.

The 'Blue Rebellion' and after: In March 1859 thousands of ryots in Bengal refused to grow indigo. As the rebellion spread, ryots refused to pay rents to the planters, and attacked indigo factorizes armed with swords and spears bows and arrows. Women turned up to fight with pots, pans and kitchen implements. Those who worked for the planters were socially boycotted, and the gomasthas-agents of planters-who came to collect rent, were beaten up. Ryots swore they would no longer take advances to sow indigo nor be bullied by the planters' lathiyals-the lathi-wielding strongmen maintained by the planters.

In 1859, the indigo ryots felt that they had the support of the local Zamindars and village headmen in their rebellion against the planters. In many villages, headmen who had been forced to sign indigo contracts, mobilized the indigo peasants and fought pitched battles with the lathiyals. In order places even the Zamindars went around villages urging the ryots to resist the planters. These Zamindars were unhappy with the increasing power of the planters and angry at being forced by the planters to give them land on long leases. When the news spread of a simmering revolt in the indigo districts, the lieutenant governor toured the region in the winter of 1859. The ryots saw the tour as a sign of government sympathy for their plight.

As the rebellion spread, intellectuals from Calcutta rushed to the indigo districts. They wrote of the misery of the ryots, the tyranny of the planters, and the horrors of the indigo system. Worried by the rebellion, the government brought in the military to protect the planters from assault and set up the indigo commission to enquire into the system of indigo production. The commission held the planters guilty, and criticized them for the coercive methods they used with indigo cultivators. It declared that indigo production was not profitable for ryots. The





commission asked the ryots to fulfill their existing contracts but also told them that they could refuse to produce indigo in future.

After the revolt, indigo production collapsed in Bengal. But the planters now shifted their operation to Bihar. With the discovery of synthetic dyes in the late nineteenth century their business was severely affected, but yet managed to expand production. When Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa, a peasant from Bihar persuaded him to visit Champaran and see the plight of the indigo cultivators there. Mahatma Gandhi's visit in 1917 marked the beginning of the Champaran movement against the indigo planters.

Tea and Coffee: The British had monopoly over the majority of tea plantations of Bengal and Assam. Indians were made to work as labourers in these plantations. The same was the case with coffee, which was grown on a large scale in the south in the Coorg area. Indian tea and coffee were very much in demand in the world market.

Results of the Growth of Modern Industries

Since modern industries were established in locations convenient to the British, some parts of India progressed while others remained undeveloped. You must remember that most of these factories were originally owned by the British, and all the profit went to them.

