

10th - The Age of Industrialisation II



Manchester Comes to India: In 1772, Henry Patullo, an official of the East India Company, said that the demand for Indian textiles could never reduce due to its fine quality. In 1811-12, the share of cotton textile industry was 33 per cent of India's export; by 1850-51, it was just 3 per cent. In the 19th century, textile industries in England developed. The industrialists pressurised the government to impose import duties on cotton textiles, so that Manchester goods could sell in Britain without facing any competition. At the same time, the industrialists persuaded the East India Company to sell British manufactures in the Indian market. At the end of the 18th century, there had been virtually no import of cotton piece-goods into India, but by the 1870s, cotton import from England was over 50 per cent of the value of Indian imports.

Koshtis: A Community of Weavers: The Koshtis, like the weavers of the finer (thin) kinds of cloth in other parts of India, had fallen upon evil times. They were unable to compete with the showy goods which Manchester sends in such abundance. They migrated to Beror in order to obtain wages.

Problems Faced by Indian Weavers: Indian weavers faced following two problems at the same time:

1. Their export market collapsed.
2. The local market was flooded with Manchester goods (goods imported from Britain). These imported cotton goods were so cheap that Indian weavers could not easily compete with them.

By the 1860s, Indian weavers faced a new problem. American Civil War started and cotton supplies from US was stopped, thus Britain turned to India. As cotton exports from India increased, the price of raw cotton increased. Weavers in India did not get sufficient cotton and they were forced to buy raw cotton at high prices.

Factories come up: Cotton and jute mills were the first to be established in India. The first cotton mill was set up in 1854 in Bombay and the first jute mill was set up in 1855 in Bengal. Till 1862, four mills were set up with 94000 spindles and 2150 looms. In North India, the Elgin mill was started in Kanpur in the 1860s and a year later, the first cotton mill of Ahmedabad was set up. By 1874, the first spinning and weaving mill of Madras began production. Most of these industries were set-up by Indian entrepreneurs.

The Early Entrepreneurs: From the late 18th century, the British in India began exporting opium to China and took tea from China to England. Many Indian businessmen became junior players in this trade. They provided finance and procured supplies and shipping consignments. Some of them had visions to develop industrial enterprises in India. Some famous industrialists of 19th century were Dwarkanath Tagore, Dinshaw Petit, Jamsetjee Nusserwanjee Tata, Shiv Narayan Birla (Grandfather of GD Birla), Seth Hukumchand, etc. Dwarkanath Tagore set up six joint stock companies in the 1830s and 1840s. JN Tata set up first iron and steel works in India at Jamshedpur in 1912. Seth Hukumchand set up the first Indian jute mill in Calcutta in 1917. Some merchants from Madras traded with Burma, while others had links with the Middle East and East Africa.

Colonial Limitations Over Indian Merchants: As colonial power gained control over Indian trade, the scope of business for Indian merchants became limited. They were not allowed to trade with Europe in manufactured goods. They were allowed to export only raw materials and foodgrains like cotton, opium, wheat and



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indigo which were required by the British. Indian merchants even thrown out of shipping business. Till the First World War, European Managing Agencies controlled a large sector of Indian industries. Some of them are Bird Heiglers & Co. Andrew Yule and Jardine Skinner & Co. Indian businessmen were not even allowed to join in the Chambers of Commerce of Europeans.

Migration of Workers in Search of Jobs: With the expansion of factories, the demand for workers increased. In 1901, there were 584000 workers in the Indian factories. By 1946, the number was over 2436000. In most industrial regions, workers came from the districts around. Peasants and artisans who found no work in the village went to the industrial centres in search of work. Over 50 per cent workers in the Bombay cotton industries in 1911 came from the neighbouring district of Ratnagiri. The mills of Kanpur got most of their workers from the villages within the district of Kanpur. Most often mill workers moved between the city and their native place during harvests and festivals. As news of employment spread, workers travelled great distances in the hope of work in the mills. From the United Provinces, they even went to work in Bombay or Calcutta.

Introduction of Jobbers: Getting job was not easy. Entry to the mills was restricted. Industrialists employed a jobber to get new recruits. Jobber used to be very old and trusted worker. He got people from his village, ensured them jobs, helped them settle in the city and provided them money in times of crisis. Jobber became a person with some authority and power who sometimes misused their power.

The Peculiarities of Industrial Growth: European Managing Agencies were interested in industrial products which they could export. They established tea and coffee plantations and invested in mining, indigo and jute. Their products were not for sale in India. 'When Indian businessmen began setting up industries in the late 19th century, they tried to avoid competition with Manchester goods. The yarn produced in Indian spinning mill was coarse and was used by handloom weavers of our country or exported only to China. By the first decade of the 20th century, a series of changes affected the pattern of industrialisation.

Recapture of Home Market by Indian Industrialists: As Swadeshi Movement became stronger, the nationalist leaders urged the people to boycott foreign goods. Industrialist groups pressurised the government to increase tariff protection and grant other concessions. From 1906, the export of Indian yarn to China declined as the products of China and Japan flooded the Chinese market.

Industrialist in India started cotton cloth production and this production doubled between 1900 and 1912. Till the First World War, industrial growth was slow. The British mills were busy to produce goods for the army, thus Manchester imports into India declined. Suddenly, Indian mills had a vast home market to supply.

New factories were set up and old ones ran multiple shifts. Over the war years, industrial production boomed. Indian factories making jute bags, cloth for army uniforms, tents and leather boots, horse and mule, saddles, etc.

After the war, Britain could never recapture its old position in Indian market. Britain could not compete with US, Germany and Japan and the economy of Britain was collapsed after the war.

Small-Scale Industries Predominate: Large industries were mainly located in Bengal and Bombay and formed only a small segment of the economy. Over the rest of the country, small-scale production continued to predominate. Only 10 per

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cent of the total industrial labour force worked in registered factories in 1931. The rest worked in small workshops and household units. Handicrafts production actually expanded in the 20th century. Handicrafts people adopted new technology like fly shuttle. It improved the production without excessively pushing up costs.

Role of Weavers: Amongst weavers some produced coarse cloth while others wove finer qualities. The coarse cloth was purchased by the poor. Its demand fluctuated due to bad harvests or famines. In times of bad harvest and famines, poor people could not buy cloth as they had little to eat and their cash income disappeared. The finer varieties were bought by the rich. Famines did not affect the sale of fine varieties such as Baluchari and Banarasi saris. Further mill could not imitate the intricate designs of the weavers. Weavers and other craftspeople lived hard lives. Their life and labour was integral to the process of industrialisation.

Market for goods: Advertisement, labelling and calendars were used to popularise products by both British and Indian manufactures. Advertisement through newspapers, magazines and hoardings were used by the producers to expand their market. Advertisement makes products appear desirable and necessary. They try to shape up the minds of people and create new needs in them. Advertisements played a very significant role from the very beginning of the industrial age, for developing a new consumer culture.

Initial Stages of Advertising in India: When Manchester industrialists began selling cloth in India, they put labels on the cloth bundles 'MADE IN MANCHESTER'. Sometimes, the images of Indian Gods, Goddesses (e.g. Krishna, Saraswati) were used in these labels which made the product manufactured from a foreign land appear somewhat familiar to Indian people. By the late 19th century, manufacturers were printing calendars to popularise their products. Unlike newspapers and magazines, calendars were used even by people who could not read. Besides the images of Gods, sometimes figures of important persons, emperors and nawabs were used in advertisements and calendars. They denoted the message that the quality of the product could not be questioned as it was used by such personalities. Advertisements sometimes became a vehicle of the nationalist message of Swadeshi. The message of nationalist was "If you care for your country, then buy products that Indians produce."

Conclusion: The age of industries has meant major technological changes, growth of factories and the making of a new industrial labour force. Small-scale production and hand technology also played key role in the industrial landscape.

