

The Beginning of the Modern Age in Europe – Industrial Revolution

Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution is the name given to the series of changes which brought about a transition from production by hand to production by machine, from small-scale production to large-scale production, from handmade goods to machine-made goods.

The Industrial Revolution was not a sudden revolution. It happened gradually. The mass production of goods brought revolutionary changes in political, social and economic life of the people.

Causes of the Industrial Revolution

Factors which led to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in England:

- The beginning of the Renaissance and the Reformation led to awakening among the people in Europe. Inventions by the British scientists brought a revolution in the industries of Great Britain. The invention of the 'Spinning Jenny' by James Hargreaves in 1769 increased the speed of spinning. The invention of the 'Water Frame' by Richard Arkwright produced stronger and harder yarn as compared to the Spinning Jenny and ushered in the factory system.
- England had a large colonial empire. It procured raw materials from colonies at cheaper rates for its industries. India was one of the countries from where it purchased raw materials like cotton at extremely low rates. England not only brought raw materials at cheap rates but also sold its manufactured goods in the colonial markets. Thus, the availability of markets led to the flourishing of industries in England.
- Several raw materials such as iron and coal were available in England. Further, it was a supreme naval power. It was able to procure raw materials from other parts of the world by ships. Moderate climate of England helped in the development of textile industries.
- As England began to reap huge benefits from international trade, industries in England began to expand bringing about an increase in the production of goods and materials. Napoleonic Wars had damaged the trade and industry of the continental countries. However, since these wars were never fought in Britain, a long period of peace prevailed which led to the development of industrial production in England.
- The decline in feudalism resulted in a large number of unemployed peasants. They came to cities in search of jobs, and thus, labourers were easily available for factories in England.
- The use of charcoal and tar enabled the construction of roads in many European countries. In 1804, the locomotive engine was manufactured by George Stephenson. This improved the transport system in England.
- The invention of the steam engine by James Watt led to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. In 1813, the railways ran with the help of steam.
- Many protestant artisans of Spain and France migrated to England for the fear of religious persecution in their own countries. The English government provided them with shelter and monetary help. Their skills helped in the development of industries in England.

After the Industrial Revolution began in England, it gradually spread to Europe and America. The cotton textile industry became a leading industry in 1820. Iron and steel and chemical industries opened in France, Russia, Germany and Japan. In Russia, industries were nationalised after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Impact of the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution brought tremendous changes in human thinking, living conditions of people and the world economy. Two significant effects of the Industrial Revolution were the rise of Capitalism and Socialism.

Capitalism

- The Industrial Revolution gave rise to the theory of capitalism. Money is required for purchasing land, labour and machinery which are important means of production. When the money is invested to generate more money, it is known as **capital**. The people who own capital are known as capitalists.
- The economic and political system in the country where trade and industries are controlled by private owners for earning profit is known as capitalism. The capitalists provide money for purchasing machines, tools, implements and raw materials.
- To earn profit is the main motive of the capitalists.

Factors Leading to the Rise of Capitalism

Increase in Population: The Industrial Revolution increased the national wealth and improved the purchasing power of people. Increase in income led to the improvement in health care facilities which led to the increase in population of the country. People moved from rural to urban areas in search of job opportunities. The rural population rose sharply as new sources of food became available and death rates declined because of the decreasing number of wars and epidemic diseases like plague.

Growth of Towns: Many new cities and manufacturing sectors came to be located close to the coalfields and supplied fuel to the factories. Factories came to be located near the source of raw materials. This further led to the rise of capitalism.

Mass Production: In factories, machines helped in producing and manufacturing goods on a large scale. People living in the rural areas shifted to towns in search of employment. Mass production enabled the capitalists to amass huge wealth and gave rise to capitalism.

Disappearance of Small Farmers: Many small farmers shifted to new industrial towns. Because their lands were appropriated by the big landlords, they were forced to seek employment in factories. Availability of abundant labour for factories helped in the development of the Industrial Revolution.

Impact of Capitalism

The impact of capitalism was as follows:

- **Loss of Traditional Jobs:** The movement of people from villages to urban cities resulted in the loss of traditional jobs. Women who were engaged in spinning lost their livelihood as weaving became highly mechanised. Skilled labourers also lost jobs as machines replaced them.
- **Exploitation:** The workers in a factory lived an extremely hard life. They were paid the minimum wages. Women and children were also employed in large numbers as they could be employed for very low wages. Soon people began to criticise this system of exploitation.
- **Overcrowding:** The workers were paid low wages, and they lived in enclosed overcrowded spaces. This resulted in the spread of various diseases. Although the economy of Britain developed at a fast pace, vast inequalities existed between the rich and the poor.
- **Longer Hours of Work:** The workers were exploited by the industrialists. They were supposed to work for longer hours. The workers were expected to work for about 12–14 hours per day.

Socialism

Socialism was one of the important effects of the Industrial Revolution. Adam Smith in his work, 'Wealth of Nations' stressed that the state should not interfere in the nation's economy. Socialism developed as a reaction against the theory propounded by Adam Smith.

Socialism is an economic system in which the means of production are not controlled by individuals but by the state or by a community of people. Socialism believes in the fair distribution of wealth among the people.

Socialism is based on three principles:

- It is opposed to private capitalism.
- Socialism reflects the voice of all workers and the working classes.
- It aims at equal distribution of wealth.

Early Socialists

Many political thinkers in the early twentieth century favoured the rise of the social system in which the means of production are not owned by private individuals but by the State. Some first socialists were Babeuf, Saint Simon and Robert Owen. Robert Owen owned a cotton mill in Scotland. He reduced the working hours of the labourers and paid them good wages.

Causes Leading to the Rise of Socialism

Reaction against Capitalism: Socialism developed as a reaction against capitalism. The Industrial Revolution divided society into capitalists and socialists. The capitalists exploited the labourers by forcing them to work for longer hours and by paying them extremely low wages. This made rich people richer and poor people poorer. The socialists fought for the rights of the workers.

Trade Union Movement: The trade union developed after the Industrial Revolution to fight for the rights of the workers. Systematic protests by the members of the Trade Union forced the British government to recognise the basic rights of workers.

The Chartist Movement: The condition of workers in Britain between 1836 and 1848 deteriorated. The workers wanted social and political freedom. Their leaders put forward their demands before the Parliament in the form of a charter. This movement came to be known as 'The Chartist Movement'.

Marxist Socialism

- Karl Marx was a German political philosopher and an economist. Along with Frederick Engels, he wrote the 'Communist Manifesto' which was published in 1848. Karl Marx wrote another famous book 'Das Capital'.
- Marx believed that the capitalist society is divided into two classes—the working class, which toils and does all the work, and the capitalist class, which owns all the resources. He said that the capitalists exploit the working class. This results in conflict between the two classes.
- This class struggle leads to a crises resulting in the collapse of the capitalist system. The means of production will then pass into the hands of the working class. The working class would own all the resources, and profits would be equally divided among the people. This system came to be known as 'Marxist Socialism'.
- In socialism, when production takes place not for earning profits but for satisfying human wants, it leads to the establishment of a communist society.
- Bernstein, another socialist, advocated that socialist objectives should be achieved through democratic means.

Socialism in the World

- The Russian Revolution in 1917 aimed at the establishment of socialism in the state. Russia became a socialist country in 1917. Lenin and Trotsky were the chief architects of the Russian Revolution.
- China became a communist nation on 1 October 1949 under the leadership of Mao Tse Tung.
- Many socialist parties emerged in India too. In 1934, the Socialist Party was established under the leadership of Narendra Dev, A. Patwardhan, Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr Rammanohar Lohiya.
- Currently, socialism implies that governments should work for the upliftment of the working and depressed classes in society and should aim at promoting a just and a welfare state.
- India has adopted the word, 'Socialist' in the Preamble of the Constitution and aims at the welfare of undeveloped and underdeveloped sections of society.