

Chapter – 07

Weavers, Iron Smelters and Factory Owners

- The crafts and industries of India during British rule focused on two industries- textiles and iron and steel.
- The industrialisation of Britain had a close connection with the conquest and colonisation of India.
- In eighteenth century India was a leading nation in terms of craft and trade but with industrial revolution Britain came to known as 'Workshop of the world'.
- With the growth of industrial production, British industrialists began to see India as a vast market for their industrial products, and over the years, manufactured goods from Britain began flooding India.
- **Indian Textiles and the World Market:**
 - (i) Around 1750, India was the world's largest producer of cotton textiles.
 - (ii) Indian textile was renowned both for its fine quality and exquisite craftsmanship.
 - (iii) From the 16th century European traders began buying Indian textiles for sale in Europe.
- **Words tell us Histories:**
 - (i) Indian textiles were famous in western markets under different names such as 'Muslin' and 'Calico' (derived from Calicut).
 - (ii) Printed cotton cloths called chintz (derived from chhint) produced in Masulipatnam, Andhra Pradesh and bandanna (derived from 'bandhna' or tie and dye) produced in Gujarat and Rajasthan were ordered in bulk.
- **Famous weave patterns:**
 - (i) Patola : Surat, Ahemdabad
 - (ii) jamdani : Bangal
- **Indian Textiles in European Markets:**
 - (i) In 1720, the British government enacted a legislation 'Calico Act' banning the use of printed cotton textiles-chintz in England.
 - (ii) Indian designs were imitated and printed in England on white Muslin or plain

unbleached Indian cloth.

(iii) Spinning Jenny was invented by John Kaye in 1764.

(iv) The invention of the steam engine by Richard Arkwright in 1786 revolutionised cotton textile weaving.

- **Famous weaving centres:**

(1) Bengal (2) Gujarat (3) Andhra pradesh (4) Calicut

- **Who were the Weavers:**

(i) Weavers belonged to communities that specialized in weaving such as

Tanti(Bengal), julakas or momin (North India), kaikollars and devangs (south India).

(ii) Handloom weaving and the occupations associated with it provided livelihood for millions of Indians.

- **The Decline of Indian Textiles:**

(i) The development of cotton industries in Britain affected textile producers in India in many ways.

(ii) By the beginning of the 19th century, English-made cotton textiles successfully ousted Indian goods from their traditional markets in Africa, America and Europe.

(iii) English and European companies stopped buying Indian goods.

(iv) By the 1830s British cotton cloth flooded Indian markets. Thousands of rural women who made a living by spinning cotton thread were rendered jobless.

(v) During the National movement, Mahatma Gandhi urged people to boycott imported textiles and use hand-spun and hand woven cloth, Khadi became a symbol of nationalism.

(vi) Weavers started working as agriculture labours, mill workers and started migration as wage earners.

- **Cotton Mills Come up:**

(i) In 1854, the first cotton mill in India was set up as a spinning mill in Bombay.

(ii) By 1900, over 84 mills started operating in Bombay but colonial government did not support the mill advancement by denying the import duty on british good.

(iii) The first major spurt in the development of cotton factory production in India, was during the first World War when textile imports from Britain declined and Indian factories were called upon to produce cloth for military supplies.

- **The Sword of Tipu Sultan and Wootz Steel:**

(i) The quality of the sword came from a special type of high carbon steel called Wootz

which was produced all over South India.

(ii) Indian Wootz steel making fascinated European scientists.

(iii) The Wootz steel making process which was widely known in South-India, was completely lost by the mid-nineteenth century.

(iv) The swords and armour making industry died with the conquest of India by the British and imports of iron and steel from England displaced the iron and steel produced by craft people in India.

- **Abandoned Furnaces in Villages:**

(i) Production of Wootz steel (high carbon steel) was highly specialised technique of refining iron.

(ii) By the late 19th century the craft of iron smelting was in decline because of the forest protection laws imposed by British which made the recovery of iron ore costly.

(iii) Many people gave up their craft and looked for other means of livelihood.

(iv) By the early 20th century, the artisans producing iron and steel faced a new competitions.

- **Iron and Steel Factories:**

(i) In 1904, Charles Weld, an American geologist and Dorabji Tata, the eldest son of Jamsed ji Tata set up a modern iron and steel plant in India.

(ii) Iron smelters'Agarias' helped them finding the iron ore deposits at Rajhara hills, Chattisgarh.

(ii) The Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) came up in 1912 and began producing steel.

(iii) After 2 years of TISCO, in 1914 the First World War broke out, so imports of British Steel into India declined and the Indian Railways turned to TISCO for supply of rails.

(iv) Overtime TISCO became the biggest steel industry within the British empire.