

Revision Notes

Class - 8 History

Chapter 6 - Weavers, Iron Smelters, and Factory Owners

The textile and iron industry played a very crucial role in the industrial revolution of India. These industries were also instrumental in propelling the success of Britain as the factory of the world. In Class 8 NCERT Social Science History Chapter 6, we shall look at the development of these two industries and how they impacted the then economic and political landscape of India under British rule. Moreover, we shall also discuss how colonialism affected indigenous crafts and industries.

Indian Textile and the World Market

- Even before the invasion of the British, India was the leading producer of cotton in the world. Indian textiles were renowned as they showed excellent craftsmanship and had fine quality.
- Indian textile goods were heavily traded in Southern, Western as well as Eastern Asia.
- It was in the 16th century that the European traders finally came across Indian textile and they were also impressed by the quality.

Indian Textile in the European Markets

- Although Indian textiles were in high demand, their success was not welcomed by the European traders.
- The demand for Indian textiles was so strong that other textile dealers felt threatened. Due to the supreme popularity of these goods, the European traders began protesting and demanded banning the import of Indian textile goods.
- Finally, in 1720, the British government enacted legislation forbidding the selling of Indian textiles in their market. This prohibition was in place to help the budding textile industry of Britain.
- The pressure of competition from the Indian textile industry was an important factor for technological advances in the textile industry. With

the invention of the Spinning Jenny in 1764 by John Kaye, the productivity of the textile industry increased.

- Richard Arkwright invented the steam engine in 1786. This meant that the transportation of cotton goods became cheaper. Due to such revolutionary inventions, the textile industry finally started becoming more available and affordable.
- Even with all these advancements, the Indian textile industry continued to be the leader of the trades in European markets.
- The traders would import Indian goods with the silver they exported. When the British became the Diwan of Bengal, however, they were able to import Indian textiles with the help of the people's taxes.

Who Were Weavers?

Weavers were generally part of a group of individuals who were skilled at weaving. For instance, the taant weavers of Bengal, the sale, and the Kaikollar and Devangs of south India, as well as the julahas or momin weavers of north India.

The Decline of the Cotton Industry

- The decline of the cotton industry happened due to the following reasons:
 1. The development of the British textile Industry put them at par with the Indian textile industry.
 2. Importing textile goods from India to Britain incurred high taxes due to laws governing the import.
- By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain-made textile goods removed Indian goods from the markets of different countries like Africa, America, and Europe. The loss in demand of the textile industry resulted in the downfall of the textile industry.
- The European traders stopped buying Indian textile goods and their agents also stopped paying advances for their products. The weavers tried to get the government to help relieve their plight.
- The worst hit came when the British started selling their produce in the Indian market. The Indians started buying British products and the weaving industry also lost the native market.

- Weavers were forced to quit their jobs and sustain themselves by migrating to different cities and/or taking up agriculture, etc.
- Later during the struggle for independence, Indians started wearing Indian textile items; that is when the country's textile industry revived again.

India's Cotton Mills

- In 1854, the first cotton mill in India was established in Bombay. Due to its geographical location, proximity to nearby cotton fields, it had emerged as an important port for import and export. After the mill was set up, cotton from these fields was used as raw materials.
- Many mills sprang up all across India as a result of this. In 1861, a mill was constructed in Ahmedabad. By the early 1900s, 84 cotton mills had been established in India's different towns.
- The indigenous Indian textile industry, on the other hand, had to overcome a number of challenges in its early stages. Indian textiles, for example, couldn't compete with the low-cost British goods on the market.
- The colonial British government refused to take any actions to preserve the interest of local textile businessmen. The first rise of the Indian textile industry was thus noted after World War I when British imports were declined and the Indian mills were made responsible for making cloth for the military.
- This created a demand for labor and laborers. Artisans and craftsmen from nearby locations joined the textile mills to help with production.

The Sword of Tipu Sultan and Wootz Steel

The sword of the great Tipu sultan was famous not only because of its owner but also its makers. It was made of very hard steel smelt from iron available in India and known as the Wootz steel.

- The iron smelting industry in India was a flourishing industry before colonization. It was produced in villages by smelters who used iron ore from forests. Charcoal from the forest was also used to produce the energy required for smelting iron.

- However, by the nineteenth century, the iron smelting industry of India was declining rapidly.

The reasons for the decline in the iron smelting industry are:

- **Forest laws in India:** The forest laws in India prevented people from entering forests. With these laws, people could not procure wood for charcoal or ore for iron.
- **High taxes on smelters:** In the regions, the government allowed access to forests, the people had to pay high taxes for the said. The result was that the end product had very high selling prices and lower net profit.
- **Iron and steel import from Britain:** By the end of the nineteenth century, Britain started importing steel and iron to India. These cheap resources were used to make utensils and implements.
- By the end of the twentieth century, the iron smelters were forced to leave their homes and migrate elsewhere for employment.

The Iron and Steel Factories in India

- The beginning of the rise of the iron and steel industry in India began with the efforts made by Dorabji Tata.
- In his effort to find suitable sources of iron ore in India, he discovered the Rajhara hills from the information obtained from the Agarais. The iron ore was of very good quality. However, due to the lack of suitable water sources, Tata could not immediately set up his factory near the source.
- The opportunity of setting off the iron industry came after Jamshedpur was established after clearing a forested area near the source.
- In 1912, the Tata Iron and Steel Company was founded. The construction of this facility took place at the same time as the growth of Indian railways. The iron and steel required for this expansion were provided by TISCO.
- TISCO saw a surge in the iron and steel sector during World War II when imports from Britain fell due to the war's increased need for iron. TISCO also provided Britain with the iron and steel is required to build weapons and ammunition throughout the conflict.

- As the Nationalist movement kept on gaining momentum the textile and iron industries in India kept getting stronger.

i. Important Questions and Answers

Q1. What were the problems of Indian textile during British rule?

Ans: The problems of the Indian textile industry during British rule are mentioned below:

- Due to the high demand for Indian textile products in the European market, the import of Indian textile goods was banned in a number of countries including Britain.
- The industrial revolution in Britain paved the way for the development of spinning Mills which improved production time.
- The invention of steam engines also decreased the cost of transport and made cotton goods more available to the people.
- Products developed by the British textile industry became more popular due to low prices and the native industry lost its charm.

2. Why did the Indian textile industry fall after the industrial revolution in Britain?

Ans: The reasons for the fall of the textile industry are:

- Due to technological advances, the production time for cotton goods decreased.
- Raw materials from India were brought by the British at cheap prices and exported to their country for making finished products.
- The textile products from India could not compete against the products produced in the foreign market due to superior technology.
- Transportation by steam engines became less time-consuming and cheaper. Foreign goods thus gained favor in the market as the Indian goods were costlier and more difficult to come by.

3. Discuss iron smelting before Colonisation (Wooltz steel)? Why did it decline after colonization?

Ans: Smelters smelted iron in every settlement. Forests were used to harvest minerals, as well as charcoal. Women used bellows to burn the charcoal while the men melted the iron. The furnaces were powered by wood-fired charcoal. Smelters were located in each hamlet.

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The following are the factors that have contributed to the collapse of the iron industry:

- The British introduced forest laws that prevented laborers from collecting iron ore and charcoal from the forest without which the furnaces could not function and iron could not be smelted.
- In regions where natives were allowed to collect resources from the forest, there was a high tax imposition which reduced the net profit of the laborers.
- The local iron smelting industry could not compete with the foreign iron industry which imported iron and steel at very low prices.

5. How did Tata help the iron industry?

Ans: The rebirth of the iron-smelting business was due to Dorabji Tata. He was the one who discovered the source of the finest iron in India. The set-up of the

factory was however not possible at first due to the absence of suitable water sources in the vicinity. Tata set up their industry in Jamshedpur after the area was cleared of forests to facilitate industrialization. The Tata Iron and Steel Company was responsible for providing the iron needed for railway expansion in India. They also supplied iron to the East India Company during World War I which was utilized for making arms and ammunition in the war.

6. Why was Bombay important for the textile industry?

Ans: Bombay was an important port that was required for the import and export of foreign goods. The businessmen in Bombay earned money specifically through the import and export of goods. This made Bombay ideal for businessmen to set up their factories. The first textile mill in India was set up in Bombay by Parsi and Gujarati businessmen. Cotton from surrounding cotton fields in Gujarat provided the raw materials needed for the industry. The Nationalist Movement grew stronger with time and coupled with the fact that the British imports declined during World War I, made the cotton textile industry gain more success.