The Age of Industrialisation

Class 10 Social Science (History) - Comprehensive Notes

1. Introduction: Before the Industrial Revolution

Often, we associate industrialisation with the growth of factory industries. However, there was large-scale industrial production for an international market even before factories began to dot the landscape in England and Europe. This phase is referred to as **proto-industrialisation**.

1.1. Proto-Industrialisation

- **Meaning:** The period of industrialisation before the first factories came up in Europe.
- **System:** Merchants from towns in Europe began moving to the countryside, supplying money to peasants and artisans, persuading them to produce for an international market.
- **Why move to the countryside?** In towns, urban crafts and trade guilds were powerful. They controlled prices, restricted entry of new people, and maintained a monopoly. Rulers granted different guilds the monopoly right to produce and trade in specific products. Therefore, new merchants could not set up business in towns.
- **Relationship:** A close relationship developed between towns and the countryside. Merchants were based in towns but the work was done mostly in the countryside.

1.2. The Coming Up of the Factory

- The earliest factories in England came up by the 1730s, but they multiplied only in the late 18th century.
- **Cotton** was the leading sector in the first phase of industrialisation up to the 1840s.
- Richard Arkwright created the cotton mill. Within the mill, all the processes were brought together under one roof and management, allowing a more careful supervision over the production process.

1.3. The Pace of Industrial Change

- **Cotton and Iron & Steel:** Cotton was the leading sector up to the 1840s. After that, the iron and steel industry led the way due to the expansion of railways.
- **Traditional Industries:** The new industries could not easily displace traditional industries. Textiles were still largely produced within domestic units, not in factories.
- **Pace of Technological Change:** Technological changes occurred slowly. New technology was expensive, and merchants and industrialists were cautious about using it. Machines often broke down and repair was costly.

2. Hand Labour and Steam Power

In Victorian Britain, there was no shortage of human labour. Industrialists had no problem of labour shortage or high wage costs. They did not want to introduce machines that got rid of human labour and required large capital investment.

2.1. Why Industrialists Preferred Hand Labour over Machines

- **Seasonal Demand:** In many industries (gas works, breweries, bookbinders, ships), the demand for labour was seasonal. Industrialists usually preferred hand labour, employing workers only for the season.
- **Variety of Products:** A range of products could be produced only with hand labour. Machines were oriented to produce uniform, standardized goods for a mass market, but the market often demanded goods with intricate designs and specific shapes.
- **Upper-Class Preference:** In Victorian Britain, the upper classes (aristocrats and bourgeoisie) preferred things produced by hand. Handmade products came to symbolize refinement and class.

2.2. Life of the Workers

- **Abundance of Labour:** The abundance of labour in the market affected the lives of workers. As news of possible jobs travelled to the countryside, hundreds tramped to the cities.
- **Getting a Job:** Finding a job depended on existing networks of friendship and kin relations.
- **Living Conditions:** Many job seekers had to wait weeks, spending nights under bridges or in night shelters. Seasonality of work meant prolonged periods without work.
- **Wages and Prices:** Real wages fell during periods of price rise. The income of workers depended not just on the wage rate, but on the number of days of work.
- **Fear of Technology:** The fear of unemployment made workers hostile to the introduction of new technology. For example, when the **Spinning Jenny** was introduced in the woolen industry, women who survived on hand spinning began attacking the new machines.

3. Industrialisation in the Colonies (Focus on India)

3.1. The Age of Indian Textiles

- Before the age of machine industries, silk and cotton goods from India dominated the international market in textiles.
- Armenian and Persian merchants took the goods from Punjab to Afghanistan, eastern Persia, and Central Asia.
- A vibrant sea trade operated through the main pre-colonial ports: Surat (Gujarat coast), Masulipatnam (Coromandel coast), and Hooghly (Bengal).

3.2. What Happened to Weavers?

The consolidation of East India Company (EIC) power after the 1760s did not initially lead to a decline in textile exports from India. However, once the EIC established political power, it asserted a monopoly right to trade.

- **Elimination of Traders:** The Company tried to eliminate existing traders and brokers connected with the cloth trade, and establish a more direct control over the weavers.
- **The Gomasthas:** The Company appointed a paid servant called the **Gomastha** to supervise weavers, collect supplies, and examine the quality of cloth.

- **System of Advances:** Weavers were given loans to purchase raw materials. Those who took loans had to hand over the cloth they produced to the Gomastha. They could not take it to any other trader.
- **Impact on Weavers:** The new Gomasthas were outsiders, with no long-term social link with the village. They acted arrogantly, marched into villages with sepoys, and punished weavers for delays. Weavers lost space to bargain for prices and were tied to the Company.

3.3. Manchester Comes to India

In 1772, Henry Patullo, a Company official, ventured to say that the demand for Indian textiles could never reduce. Yet, by the beginning of the 19th century, a long decline of textile exports from India started.

- **Import Duties in Britain:** As cotton industries developed in England, industrial groups pressured the government to impose import duties on cotton textiles so that Manchester goods could sell in Britain without facing outside competition.
- **Export to India:** The East India Company was persuaded to sell British manufactures in Indian markets as well.
- **Problems for Indian Weavers:**
  1. Their export market collapsed.
  2. The local market shrank, being glutted with cheap Manchester imports.
  3. By the 1860s, weavers faced a new problem: they could not get sufficient supply of raw cotton of good quality. As the American Civil War broke out, cotton supplies from the US were cut off, and Britain turned to India. Raw cotton exports from India increased, making raw cotton excessively expensive for local weavers.

4. Factories Come Up in India

The first cotton mill in Bombay came up in 1854. By 1862, four mills were at work. In Bengal, the first jute mill came up in 1855.

4.1. The Early Entrepreneurs

- Many Indians became junior players in the trade with China, providing finance, procuring supplies, and shipping consignments.
- **Prominent Figures:**
  - **Dwarkanath Tagore** (Bengal): Made his fortune in the China trade before turning to industrial investment.
  - **Dinshaw Petit and Jamsetjee Nusserwanjee Tata** (Bombay): Built huge industrial empires in India, accumulating their initial wealth partly from exports to China and partly from raw cotton shipments to England.
  - **Seth Hukumchand** (Marwari businessman): Set up the first Indian jute mill in Calcutta in 1917.
- **Colonial Restrictions:** Indians were barred from trading with Europe in manufactured goods, and had to export mostly raw materials and food grains (raw cotton, opium, wheat, indigo) required by the British.

4.2. Where Did the Workers Come From?

- In most industrial regions, workers came from the surrounding districts. Peasants and artisans who found no work in the village went to industrial centres.
- Example: Over 50% workers in the Bombay cotton industries in 1911 came from the neighbouring district of Ratnagiri.
- **Jobbers:** Getting jobs was always difficult. Industrialists usually employed a **jobber** to get new recruits. The jobber was an old and trusted worker. He got people from his village, ensured them jobs, and helped them settle. Jobbers eventually became persons with some authority and power, often demanding money and gifts for their favour.

5. The Peculiarities of Industrial Growth

- European Managing Agencies, which dominated industrial production in India, were interested in certain kinds of products: tea, coffee, mining, indigo, and jute. Most of these were exclusively for export, not for sale in India.
- When Indian businessmen began setting up industries, they avoided competing with Manchester goods in the Indian market. Early cotton mills produced coarse cotton yarn rather than fabric, which was exported to China.
- **The Swadeshi Movement:** In the first decade of the 20th century, the Swadeshi movement gathered momentum. Nationalists mobilized people to boycott foreign cloth. Industrial groups organized themselves to protect their collective interests, pressuring the government to increase tariff protection.
- **Impact of the First World War:**
  - The war created a dramatically new situation. With British mills busy with war production to meet the needs of the army, Manchester imports into India declined.
  - Indian mills had a vast home market to supply.
  - As the war prolonged, Indian factories were called upon to supply war needs: jute bags, cloth for army uniforms, tents and leather boots.
  - Industrial production boomed. After the war, Manchester could never recapture its old position in the Indian market.

6. Market for Goods

When new products are produced, people have to be persuaded to buy them. One way in which new consumers are created is through advertisements.

- **Labels:** Manchester industrialists put labels on the cloth bundles. The label was needed to make the place of manufacture and the name of the company familiar to the buyer. The label was also a mark of quality. When buyers saw "MADE IN MANCHESTER" written in bold, they felt confident about buying the cloth.
- **Images of Gods and Goddesses:** Images of Indian gods and goddesses regularly appeared on these labels. It was as if the association with gods gave divine approval to the goods being sold.
- **Calendars:** By the late 19th century, manufacturers were printing calendars to popularise their products. Unlike newspapers, calendars were used even by people who could not read.

- **Nationalist Message:** Indian manufacturers used advertisements to carry a nationalist message: "If you care for the nation, then buy products that Indians produce." Advertisements became a vehicle of the nationalist message of Swadeshi.