

CHAPTER - 5

THE AGE OF INDUSTRIALISATION

Question 1:

Explain the following:

- (a) Women workers in Britain attacked the Spinning Jenny.
- (b) In the seventeenth century merchants from towns in Europe began employing peasants and artisans within the villages.
- (c) The port of Surat declined by the end of the eighteenth century.
- (d) The East India Company appointed *gomasthas* to supervise weavers in India.

Answer 1:

(a) Women workers in Britain attacked the Spinning Jenny because it speeded up the spinning process, and consequently, reduced labour demand. This caused a valid fear of unemployment among women working in the woollen industry. Till date, they had survived on hand spinning, but this was placed in peril by the new machine.

(b) In the seventeenth century, merchants from towns in Europe began employing peasants and artisans within the villages because production in urban areas could not be increased due to the presence of powerful trade guilds. These maintained control over production, regulated prices and competition, and restricted the entry of new people in the trade. Monopolisation was also a common tactic. In the countryside, there were no such rules, and impoverished peasants welcomed these merchants.

(c) The port of Surat declined by the end of the eighteenth century on account of the growing power of European companies in trade with India. They secured many concessions from local courts as well as the monopoly rights to trade. This led to a decline of the old ports of Surat and Hoogly from where local merchants had operated. Exports slowed and local banks here went bankrupt.

(d) The East India Company appointed *gomasthas* to supervise weavers in India to establish a more direct control over the weavers, free of the existing traders and brokers in the cloth trade. The *gomasthas* were the paid servants who supervised the weavers, collected supplies and examined the quality of cloth. The *gomasthas* ensured that all management and control of the cloth industry came under the British. This helped in eliminating competition, controlling costs and ensuring regular supplies of cotton and silk products.

Question 2:

Write True or False against each statement:

- (a) At the end of the nineteenth century, 80 per cent of the total workforce in Europe was employed in the technologically advanced industrial sector.
- (b) The international market for fine textiles was dominated by India till the eighteenth century.
- (c) The American Civil War resulted in the reduction of cotton exports from India.
- (d) The introduction of the fly shuttle enabled handloom workers to improve their productivity

Answer 2:

- (a) False
- (b) True
- (c) False
- (d) True

Question 3:

Explain what is meant by proto-industrialisation.

Answer 3:

Proto-industrialisation is the phase of industrialisation that was not based on the factory system. Before the coming of factories, there was large-scale industrial production for an international market. This part of industrial history is known as proto-industrialisation.

Discuss

Question 1:

Why did some industrialists in nineteenth-century Europe prefer hand labour over machines?

Answer 1:

Some industrialists in nineteenth-century England preferred hand labour over machines because there was no labour shortage in the market, and as a result, there was no problem of high wage costs either. Industrialists did not wish to replace hand labour with machines that would require large capital investment. Also, in industries where the production and amount of labour required were dependent on the seasons, hand labour was preferred for its lower costs. Apart from this, many goods could only be manufactured by hand. Machines could provide mass quantities of a uniform product. But the demand was for intricate designs and shapes; this required human skill, and not mechanical technology. Handmade products also stood for refinement and class status. It was commonly believed that machine-made goods were for export to the colonies.

Question 2:

How did the East India Company procure regular supplies of cotton and silk textiles from Indian weavers?

Answer 2:

After establishing political power, the East India Company successfully procured regular supplies of cotton and silk textiles from Indian weavers via a series of actions. These actions were aimed at eliminating competition from other colonial powers, controlling costs and ensuring regular supplies of cotton and silk goods for Britain.

Firstly, it appointed *gomasthas* or paid servants to supervise weavers, collect supplies and examine textile quality.

Secondly, it disallowed Company weavers from dealing with other buyers. This was ascertained by a system of giving advances to the weavers for procuring raw materials. Those who took these loans could not sell their cloth to anyone but the *gomasthas*.

Question 3:

Imagine that you have been asked to write an article for an encyclopaedia on Britain and the history of cotton. Write your piece using information from the entire chapter.

Answer 3:

Britain and the History of Cotton

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, merchants would trade with rural people in textile production. A clothier would buy wool from a wool stapler, carry it to the spinners, and then, take the yarn to the weavers, fuller and dyers for further levels of production. London was the finishing centre for these goods. This phase in British manufacturing history is known as proto-industrialisation. In this phase, factories were not an essential part of industry. What was present instead was a network of commercial exchanges.

The first symbol of the new era of factories was cotton. Its production increased rapidly in the late nineteenth century. Imports of raw cotton sky-rocketed from 2.5 million pounds in 1760 to 22 million pounds in 1787. This happened because of the invention of the cotton mill and new machines, and better management under one roof. Till 1840, cotton was the leading sector in the first stage of industrialisation.

Most inventions in the textile production sector were met with disregard and hatred by the workers because machines implied less hand labour and lower employment needs. The Spinning Jenny was one such invention. Women in the woollen industry opposed and sought to destroy it because it was taking over their place in the labour market.

Before such technological advancements, Britain imported silk and cotton goods from India in vast numbers. Fine textiles from India were in high demand in England. When the East India Company attained political power, they exploited the weavers and textile industry in India to its full potential, often by force, for the benefit of Britain. Later, Manchester became the hub of cotton production. Subsequently, India was turned into the major buyer of British cotton goods.

During the First World War, British factories were too busy providing for war needs. Hence, demand for Indian textiles rose once again. The history of cotton in Britain is replete with such fluctuations of demand and supply.

Question 4:

Why did industrial production in India increase during the First World War?

Answer 4:

Industrial production in India increased during the First World War because British mills became busy with tending to war needs. Manchester imports decreased, and Indian mills suddenly had a huge home market to supply. Later, they were also asked to supply war needs such as jute bags, cloth for army uniforms, tents, leather boots, saddles and other items. There was so much demand that new factories had to be set up even when old ones ran on multiple shifts. Industrial production boomed with the employment of new workers and longer working hours.