

Indian Industries during the British Period

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Abstract – Before the British rule, India was self-sufficient in industrial production but during the British rule, India fell down to the position of supplier of raw material to British industries. The period of 18-19 century was recognized for the industrial revolution in Europe, this rapid development of industries required more markets for the goods. To fulfill the requirement of European industries the development of Indian industries was controlled and affected to a large extent by policies of British government. All the policies implemented by the British government had a deep impact on the Indian industries as well as on Indian economy. At that time of British rule textile, cotton, silk, and handicrafts were the main industries in India. At the starting phase of British rule these industries were mainly in the hand of Indians, the decline of these Indian industries was started at the end of the eighteenth century. The present study illustrates the status and development of some important industries of India during British rule.

Key words – Industry, Cotton Silk, Coal, Mining.

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INTRODUCTION

As the Indian history and most published sources of European shows that in the seventeenth and early part of eighteenth century India was the more economically advanced country than most of the European nations. Industries of India were well known over the world for craftsmanship, low cost and quality product. From various part of the world large number of traders came to India and exchanged their gold and silver with the product of Indian industries, balance of trade was always remain favorable in India during that time period. These great features of our industries and economy attracted widespread attention throughout the world. Thus at the time of industrial revolution in Europe India was the richest nation of the world. India's trade prosperity hearts the Europeans, Daniel Defoe in 1708 wrote in his weekly review about this wealth drain and warned the government of Europe and asked them to take strong step against this pattern. After that for the prohibition of Indian goods in European markets several acts were made by the government. They thought that it is must to restrict Indian goods to protect their own manufacturers. The condition was drastically changed for Indian industries after implementation of acts 11 and 12 of William 111 Cap and heavy duty and tariffs. Indian was became the supplier of raw material to European industries instead of manufacturing country.

STATUS, DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF INDIA'S IMPORTED INDUSTRIES

Several factors are responsible for decline of Indian industries during eighteenth and nineteenth century

such as: a) loss of royal patronage b) impact of the industrial revolution c) coercive tactics used by the Britishers d) loss of external markets e) indifference of the British rulers. In order of hinder the development of Indian industries in spite of all the above factors heavy tariffs were imposed on various Indian goods as result the market of the chief Indian exports began to fall down and by the half of the eighteenth century India became a raw material supplier.

STATUS OF MAJOR INDUSTRIES

At the time of British rule cotton, textile, coal mining, plantation and iron and steel industries were the important industries status and development of these industries are discussed in this section.

COAL AND MINING INDUSTRY

Coal and mining industry is essential for the development of other industries and economy. In India production of coal has been known since ancient times. The British Magistrate of Chhota Nagpur, Mr. S.G. Healy was perhaps the first who undertook large scale coal mining. In 1774, Mr. Healy and Mr. John Summer obtained the privilege of mining coal in Pachete and Birbhum from Warren Hastings the governor general of Bengal. This joint enterprise produced 90 tons of coal with the help of six mines, but after Mr. Healy transfer, this enterprise suffered a great set back. After that in 1814 a mine were opened in Raniganj by Mr. Jones a retired mining engineer, after the success of this mine many other were opened in Raniganj.

At the starting phase of coal mining industry its growth remained slow just because of lack of demand for coal. The output from coal mines was 36000 tons in 1893 and it was 91000 tons in 1846. After the establishment of other industries and introduction of rail transport demand for coal was increased. It is clear from the table that the output from coal mines increased steadily. In the latter half of nineteenth century the growth of coal production was much faster just because of increased demand of coal by other industries.

Plantation Industries: During British rule various plantation industries such as: tea, coffee, rubber and indigo were developed.

Rubber: Rubber was introduced in 1870's from Brazil at the exemplify of the government. Maharaja of Travancore introduced rubber into his state in around 1900. From the state of Maharaja Travancore the planting of rubber spread out to the neighboring territories. In the beginning the progress of rubber plantation was very slow but after 1906 it became faster.

Coffee: Coffee was the another plantation industry which was developed during British rule. In early 1823 the British government showed there interest towards coffee growing for coffee plantation various incentives was provided by East India Company. At starting phase of coffee plantation the yield was not good. Between 1850 and 1860 the growth of coffee industry remained steady, but after that when Europeans set our more plantation of coffee a regular boom was observed in coffee output. At the time of First World War and post war period coffee industry became more profited and area under coffee cultivation increase gradually due to higher demand.

Indigo: Since ancient time India had been famous for its indigo industry which was the base of textile industry. Indigo dyes and indigo were world famous for quality and quantity they were the important articles for export of the country. But in the earlier time of eighteenth century Indian indigo starts decline because the production of indigo from Southern America and West Indies was more efficient than Indian product of indigo. At the end of eighteenth century the production of indigo began to be developed just because of growing cotton manufacturing under the influence of Europeans. Several industry of indigo was opened in 1831 there was around 400 indigo factories in Bengal alone and in 1887 around 415 factories of indigo were reported to be in Azamgarh district. At the end of nineteenth century cultivation of natural indigo became unprofitable due to the sharp competition offered by Germany made synthetic dyes. In nineteenth century the area under cultivation of indigo remains one third of that in 1894.

Cotton Industry: India is known as birth place of cotton production. Before nineteenth century the

history of Indian cotton industry was very rich cotton trade was extensive in eighteenth century. Indian cotton industry started decline in the beginning of nineteenth century while on the other hand British cotton industry started flourishing at that time. The imposition of heavy tariff on Indian cotton, the invention of power loom and other mechanical practices, monopoly of trade created by East India Company in their own favour and raising duties on Indian cotton from time to time were the main reasons for the decline of Indian cotton industry. It is clear from the table that by 1832 Indian manufactures were almost removed from the market.

Iron and Steel Industry: Iron and Steel industry is the backbone of a country economic and industrial development. In India this industry was used to made weapons, various tools and implements and for decorative purposes. The quality of Indian product was remarkably high, the famous iron column in Delhi is one of the example. The history of production of iron and steel with the help of modern techniques was very old. Under the protection of East India Company in 1808 a small factory was established by Mr. Duncan but it was closed down very soon. After that various factories were established but appreciable quantity of steel and iron could not be produced, in this situation an investigation were made to know the causes of failure of these factories. For testing purpose samples of the products were sent to England and it was found that the reasons behind the failure of ventures were the lack of capital, defective machinery and due to inexperience. The investigation report suggests that the iron and steel industry could succeed only by modern methods and techniques and in those regions in which coal and iron were in large amount. So many efforts were done to established iron and steel industry in the country by government in spite of a number of failures.

CONCLUSION:

The present study deals with status and development of India's important industries during British rule. It is clear from the study that great efforts were done by British government to strengthen iron and steel industry in India does matter whether for their own benefit or for the country. The output from coal mines increased steadily. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the growth of coal production was much faster just because of increased demand of coal by other industries. The import and export of cotton made goods of India were almost removed from the market by 1832. In the beginning the progress of rubber plantation was very slow but after 1906 it became faster. Just because of mal practices of British government the country was reduced to the position of supplier of raw material to British industries in spite of the position of self-sufficiency.

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