

# **Magadh Mahila College**

**Patna University, Patna**

**HISTORY**

**B.A. – I**

**PAPER – II**

**RISE OF MODERN WEST**

**Unit – 10**

**Industrial Revolution**

**Topic: - Impact of the Industrial  
Revolution**

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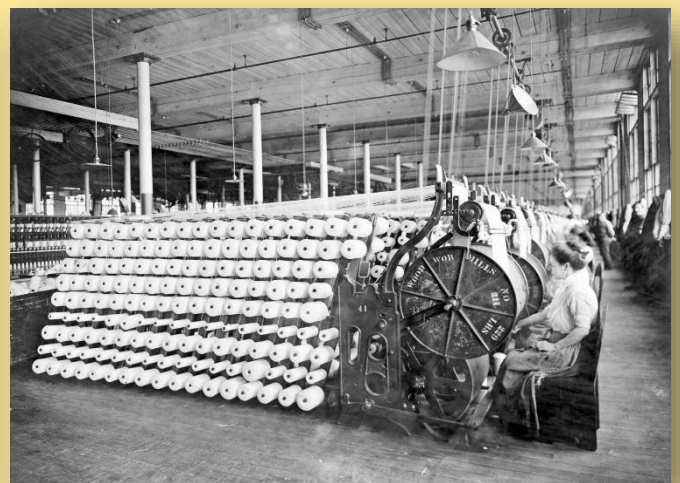
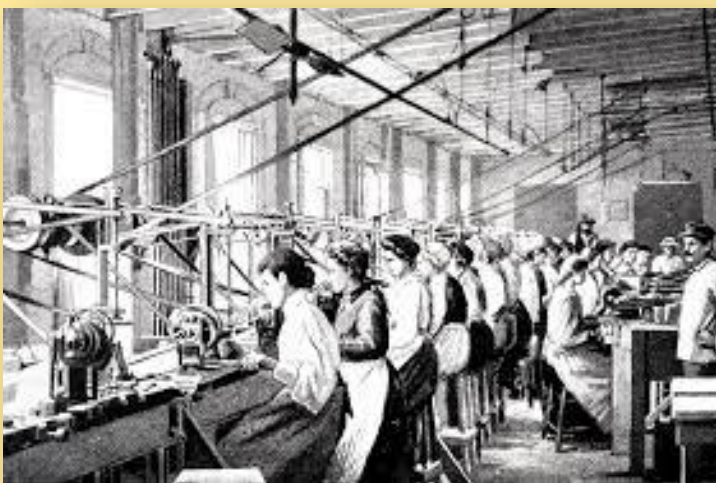
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## Introduction

The period from 1770 to 1914 saw unprecedented changes in the sphere of industry. The changes were so large in number, so varied in character, so wide in extent and so profound in their impact as to be known in history as the Industrial Revolution. It began in England and gradually spread to Europe and later to the world. It effected fundamental change in the method, technique and organization of industry.

The term 'revolution' may appear as a misnomer in this case. There was no sudden or violent change, no popular uprising nor any visible outcry. It is true that changes did not come suddenly or through any violent means. The changes came through a slow and evolutionary process. For that reason the term 'evolution' may appear as more appropriate in this situation. But we must remember that the term 'revolution' means fundamental change in the system and the happenings in the sphere of industry in the said period definitely effected fundamental change in the economic system to deserve the nomenclature 'revolution'. It is not necessary that an economic revolution has to be violent or sudden as political revolution like that in France in 1789, in China in 1911 and in Russia in 1917. The French writer, Blanqui was the first to use the term 'industrial revolution' as early as 1837 in the context of the great economic changes in England; later Jevons, Marx and Engels used it, and Arnold Toynbes used it in 1884.



## Impact of the Industrial Revolution

### **Economy Impact :**

The impact of the Industrial Revolution on Britain and some other countries of western Europe like France, Belgium Holland and Germany was overwhelming. Of course, It was Britain that derived the maximum benefit from the revolution. She became the richest nation in the world. Due to the mass production of goods in factories, the output enhanced by 10 to 15 times in various industries from 1770 to 1820.

The British manufactures found maximum access to every part of the world. Britains exports rose 20 times from 1770 to 1820 in terms of both quantity and value. Her status as the leading exporting country continued throughout the 19th century. Moreover, it were mainly the British ships that carried her exports worldwide and this gave a tremendous boost to her shipping as well as ship-building industry. She became the mistress of the seas and her dominance as a sea power and merchant marine nation remained till the World War I.

The Industrial Revolution marked the advent of 'laissez faire' as the new set of principle that would guide the European economy, and spread their tentacles in other parts of the world. The economy passed from the stage of MERCANTILE CAPITALISM to that of INDUSTRIAL or FREE TRADE CAPITALISM. Free trade free market, and free enterprise became the gospel of the advocates of new economic order. Individual's role in trade, commerce and industry was stressed, and the ideas of state monopoly, state control, bullionism and tariff barriers were rejected. Thus, it heralded the triumph of the theories enunciated by Adam Smith, Ricardo and John Stuart Mill.

There were significant demographic changes too, we must note it again that Increase in population was not a result, but a cause of the revolution which we have

already noted. Of course, some demographic changes did occur. More and more people began to shift to industrial, mining and port towns for a living. Rural peasantry flocked to such towns and turned into urban proletariat. This trend of migration resulted in the increase in population of London, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Bristol, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow and other places. The industrial changes resulted in the massing of people in the coal and iron regions of the north, of South Wales and the Midlands which had been sparsely populated earlier. The trend begun by the Industrial Revolution, continued with increasing momentum in the 19th and 20th centuries resulting in 75% of people living in urban areas, while only 25% live in rural areas.

### **Social Impact:**

The Industrial Revolution immensely affected the society of Europe, particularly that of Britain. Three new sections, based on economic status and Interests, appeared in the society.

The industrial elite, better called 'the grande bourgeoisie', consisting of big industrialists, capitalists and bankers, appeared as the most wealthy section of the society. With wealth came power and influence. This elite included the big business houses who obtained an honoured status in the society. Two of the outstanding prime ministers in British History - Robert Peel and William Gladstone - hailed from such big business families.

The educated middle class elite, better known as the 'professional bourgeoisie', consisting of engineers, highly skilled technicians, doctors and lawyers, also became a powerful section in the society. This section of the middle class proved to be the most potential source of man power needed by the growing Industrial and commercial activities.

The third section of population that emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution was the working class - the vast multitude of labourers who thronged to towns and cities to work in factories, mines and docks. Their number was growing fast

since the beginning of the 19th century. They lived in slums in the most unhealthy conditions. The working conditions in the factories were worse still. They had to perform long hours of work at low wages. Not only men, but women and children too were employed in large number. The famous Report of Mayhew as well as Marx's Das Capital draw a pitiable picture of the working class people in London in the mid-19th century.

The urban slums which formed dwellings of the workers created a lot of social problems. They turned into dens for all sorts of criminal activities, like sale of liquor, theft and prostitution. But the number of workers was growing fast, and gradually they became a force to reckon with.

Another important social impact was the increase of social mobility. This means that the rigidity of class distinction was loosening. New values and role models were appearing in the urban industrial society. The pride and sense of honour of the aristocracy was slowly but surely making way for the wealth and enterprise of the fast rising industrial-business elite. In a society where wealth became the index of success and status, matrimonial alliance between classes began to take place. An aristocrat family marrying its offspring into a rich business family was not uncommon now. Similarly, matrimonial alliance between an ordinary middle class family and that of a well-to-do working class was also not unusual now. Thus class barriers began to break slowly but surely.

A very significant impact which recent studies point out is that the low middle class, called the 'petty bourgeoisie', began to gain confidence and courage by the growing trend of industrialism. The enterprising members of this class were ready to take risk for a great gain. It was this class which lacked capital but by sheer hard work, some contact and good economic sense many individuals from it reached the pinnacle of success in business and Industry. It produced many entrepreneurs.

## Political Impact:

The political effects of the Industrial Revolution were also far-reaching. The ruling authorities in England had to accept the hard reality that with fast growing wealth and social influence, the industrial and professional bourgeoisie could not be kept away from the corridor of political power. Indeed this bourgeoisie section began to fight for share in the government. The relentless struggle succeeded with the passing of the historic FIRST REFORM ACT in 1832. This gave right of vote to the middle class. It marked the end of the sole authority of aristocracy in politics and the growing clout of middle class over British politics.

The coming of the working class as a political force was another remarkable consequence of the Industrial Revolution. As industrial activities grew, the number of workers rapidly increased. The people realised the strength of the labour after the LUDDITE UPRISING of 1819 and the CHARTIST MOVEMENT of 1838-48. The government had to withdraw in 1821 (after the Luddite uprising) the Combination Act of 1799 which forbade working-class agitation. By the mid-19th century the labour had grown so enormously in number that both Tory-Conservative and Whig-Liberal parties felt that granting of right to vote to workers was inevitable. Both wanted to grab the support of labour by granting them vote. The Tories succeeded when the Disraeli-Deerby government granted them franchise by passing the SECOND REFORM ACT in 1867.

This very much empowered the workers. They were inspired to combine and organise themselves to fight for rights. This gave rise to the TRADE UNION MOVEMENT in Britain. Realising the power of the working class movement the Gladstone ministries (1868-74 and 1880-85) and Disraeli ministry (1874-80) passed a series of legislation for the benefit of workers. Their right to strike and form union for exacting demands from the management was recognized. The struggle of the workers to find a rightful place for themselves in politics attained success with the formation of

the Labour Party in 1906. The British trade unionism makes one of the most remarkable success stories in working class history.

## **Intellectual Impact:**

The Industrial Revolution, along with the French Revolution of 1789, provided impetus to the rise of liberal economic and political philosophy. The laissez-faire philosophy received tremendous boost with the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. Under his leadership the group of POLITICAL ECONOMISTS, also known as Classical Economists, emerged. Another group of thinkers, called the UTILITARIANS, and consisting of eminent figures like Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mill, also advocated liberal economic order. The RADICALS formed the third group of thinkers, and the MANCHESTER RADICALS were the political activists who championed the cause of individual liberty in economic sphere and of free trade, free enterprise and free market most vigorously. THE WHIG-LIBERAL political party attracted men belonging to these groups and held sway over British politics in the 19th century.

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that the Industrial Revolution was slow and evolutionary in nature. Nothing occurred suddenly. Some fundamental factors of geography, economics and politics made England the most favourable place for the occurrence of the Industrial Revolution. But eventually it was the tremendous demand of English cotton textiles, and the need to enhance the production of the same which provided impetus to a series of mechanical inventions. These mechanical inventions, covering a long period from 1767 to 1914, became the most potent factor of the Industrial Revolution. The revolution affected Western Europe primarily and then it spread to other parts of the continent. Britain felt its impact comprehensively. It turned Britain into the industrially richest country, the leading exporter of manufactured goods and the largest shipping power. It affected significantly British economy, politics and

society.

### **Suggested Readings:-**

1. Meenakshi Phukan : Rise of Modern West
2. G. Clark : Early Modern Europe
3. Raghubir Dayal : Modern European History
4. Jain and Mathur : World History (1500 – 1950)
5. G.M. Trevelyan : Social History of England
6. Parthsarathi Gupta (ed.) : आधुनिक पश्चिम का उदय
7. लाल बहादुर वर्मा : आधुनिक यूरोप का इतिहास

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