

# Effects of Industrial Revolution Upon the Trade of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh During the 19th Century

## Abstract

There were several processes by which Britain enriched itself and impoverished India: the destruction of artisans industries so that Britain could sell her industrial products, purchases made in Britain that could have been made in India, making India bear the burden of supporting a huge army to keep itself under subjugation, employing its own countrymen in all the well-paid jobs. The British administrators unified the territory not merely with the task of governing but also for its Commercial and economic interests, as they were influenced by the Industrial Revolution. In the first half of the nineteenth century Britain was needed cheap raw material and a market for her industrial products. Thus the economic policies of India in all fields-agriculture, heavy industry, finance, tariffs, foreign capital investment, foreign trade ,banking etc-were all geared to the preservation of the colonial economy. The British connection in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (UPA & Oudh) brings out that the effect of Industrial Revolution upon the trade was in sharp contrast to its influence on the British economy.

**Keywords:** United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Industrial Revolution, Industries, British government, manufactured goods, Prices, Community, Sonar, Lohar, Carpenter, Kumhar, Regions, Farukhabad, Agra, Cawnpore, Aligarh, Benares, Meerut, etc.

## Introduction

The United Provinces of Agra and Oudh had been affected by numerous changes in the policy of the government. It was observed that India was not an industrial country in the true and modern sense of the term. But, by the standards of the 17th and 18th centuries, i.e., before the advent of the Europeans in India, India was the 'industrial workshop' of the world. Three kinds of industry existed in India

1. The rural cottage industry (weaving, carpentry, pottery etc.) usually providing the day-to-day requirements of the agriculturists in the village.
2. The urban domestic industry turning out various products (such as fine textiles etc.) for the use of townfolk and carried on by family members, possibly in a room in the house where the family lived and, finally.
3. The small urban factory producing more sophisticated products (like Iron industry), engaging some hired labourers and generally carrying specialization further than in domestic industry.

As a result, a number of Europeans came over to this part of the country and began to take interest in the industrial development and exploitation of raw materials and also of the people of the provinces.<sup>1</sup>

## Aim of the Study

To trace the effects of the Industrial Revolution upon the trade of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, it is crucial to delve upon the operations of 19th century British industrial capitalism and the governmental policies initiated by it in India that decisively broke up the Indian economic structure. The industrial capitalists of Britain had a clear cut aim in India – to reduce it to an agricultural colony of British capitalism, supplying raw materials and absorbing its manufactured goods. It had its positive as well as negative effects upon the trade of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was but natural that British business should have pioneered industrial enterprise in India. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were 194 cotton mills and 36 jute mills in India, and coal production had risen to over 6 million tons per annum. In spite of the very rapid increase in industrialisation and the fact that the foundations for



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the development of modern industries for the utilisation of coal and iron resources were laid by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, India was being gradually converted into an agricultural country.

By 1900, India had become a great exporter of rice, wheat, cotton, jute, oilseeds, etc. and an importer of British manufactured goods. In this way India had become an agricultural colony of the British. The Britishers had experience of running industries at home. British enterprise received maximum state-support. Besides, much of the business developed in the Indian provinces (like the UPA & Oudh) was related either to the Government or interest in some way connected with Britain. Though industrialisation was started by the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Britishers were more interested in their profit and not in accelerating the economic progress of India as a whole. As a result of industrialisation the rise in price was felt in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

The history of prices in these Provinces is similar to the history of prices elsewhere. During the first half of the nineteenth century there were violent oscillations according to the seasons in particular localities. A good crop meant low prices, a bad crop meant famine prices. There were great discrepancies between harvest prices and market prices. This state of things continued more or less until 1865. By that time communications had improved, and prices were steadier (Although the wages of skilled labour had risen greatly as a consequence of the extension of the railways and industries).<sup>2</sup>

There were still, however, considerable variations in different places, and the difference between market and harvest prices also was considerable. A general rise in prices began in these Provinces as elsewhere in India about 1886 and 1887. Theodore Morison has compared the prices of Farukhabad and Agra in his work 'The Industrial Organisation of an Indian Province'. He writes: "In 1842 the price at the two markets was nearly the same- Farukhabad 36 seers, and Agra 40 seers. In Farukhabad in the following year the price fell to 55 seers, whereas in Agra the price rose to 20 seers. In 1854 Farukhabad suffered a scarcity...by the rate of 28 seers, whereas Agra was in this year enjoying the abundance by a price of 50 seers to the rupee. Both districts suffered from the famine of 1860-61, and after that the two sets of prices kept close together to the end of the century'.<sup>3</sup> He has taken the decades 1850-60 as the dividing-line between the first and latter half of the century and represents the following contrasts.<sup>4</sup>

1. The prices of agricultural produce fluctuated violently before 1850, and attained comparative stability after 1860.
2. Prices before 1850 were low, and after 1860 were high, with a rising tendency.
3. Before 1850 prices in different localities fluctuated independently of each other; after 1860 they were all linked together, and fluctuated simultaneously.

Within the Indian community, conditions were not favourable for the emergence of industrial leaders, partly because of the peculiar way in which factory industry came to India, as compared to its development in England. In the west two principal groups were ready

to set up factories: the merchants and the master craftsmen. The merchants had capital, marketing ability and capacity to manage labour. The master craftsmen did not have capital but had understood the materials and their proper handling. Because of certain peculiar features, neither Indian merchants nor Indian craftsmen took interest in the factory system. Most Indian merchants belonged to the Baniya or moneylender community. They possessed capital and were eager for its security and profits. But when the factory system was introduced in India by the British the merchant class found greater opportunities for trade. The development of shipping and the building of railways resulted in larger trade, both external and internal. Besides, there were more opportunities for lending money. Thus, the merchants found greater scope for profits in their traditional occupations and hence did not give them up and take to the factory industries.

At the same time, Indian craftsmen too did not play the part played by their western counterparts in the field of industrialisation because they did not possess large capital. Besides, they were without proper training and education.

However, Indians joined the ranks of industrialists early in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their role grew throughout the period, continuously and steadily. They used the same managing agency system as the Britishers. They were becoming increasingly important members of companies established by the Britishers.

The United Provinces of Agra and Oudh had grown in commercial dimensions during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cawnpore, Aligarh, Benaras, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur and Gorakhpur had come up as important trading centres and trading had grown in volumes. But the rural industries of the region gave the same age old pictures and as everything else in the occupation i.e. in total they were still in their infancy. The highest in the list were those connected with metals. The sonar or gold smith was one of the leading workmen. The works of the precious metals were most highly paid and returnable. The Jeweller of rural area was also suspected of acting as a fence to money lenders as they were sometimes found to be engaged in money lending.<sup>5</sup>

The workers in brass, copper and bell metal held a position nearly as respectable as that of sonar. But owing to improvement in the transportation facilities they were gradually shifting towards towns. Among Hindus the use of brass or bell metal for house hold utensils was universal. Closely connected with this was the important industry of making the brass, bell metal or pewter bangles or anklets which the women of lower orders commonly wear.<sup>6</sup>

The lohar, or smith was at a lower ebb in the craftsmanship. He was commonly attached with manufacturing or repair of plough shares mattocks, wedding spades and other rude implements used by the farmers. Arrival of new tools from outside had led to decline of this art in village.

The village carpenter, the tarkhan of Punjab and the Barahi of the provinces was another important craftsman listed with village industry. Carpenter was employed in making and mending carts, well gear,

farm implements, cotton-gins and sugar mills. In Oudh is said to have receive 20lb of grain from the owner of each village plough at both harvests. Carpenter, during his free time in a year was also engaged in manufacturing of wooden pans and Benaras toys. During the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the better craftsman in the field were said to be migrating to towns.<sup>7</sup>

In the second grade of craftsman was kumhar or potter. The household utensils which he provided ranged from Ghagra to Persian wheels. Sometimes he made bricks also. Weaving was by far the most important of the village industry. Even In spite of enormous imports of cotton fabrics from Lancashire, America and from the mills at Bombay, Cawnpore, it is estimated that 60% of the cloth used was produced at home. The growth of cotton production in the latter half of the century also helped the growth of this industry. The loom, used for production was the ordinary primitive type, closely resembling the machine was used. The work was done indoors and though sufficient air entered through the limbs and cervices in the walls and the roofs of the crazy sheds which formed the factory. The light was bad and the position of workman was unhealthy.<sup>8</sup> The other village workmen concerned with cloth were the dyer, the Calico painter, the tailor and the washer man. The industries of the dyer and the printer was under the stress of foreign competition were in a state of depression.

Sugar manufacturing had come up in few areas of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar during the last decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The manufacture of sugar was of great importance, the cane was pressed in small mills, with two or three rollers, turned by bullocks. The juice was then roughly filtered and boiled and the raw sugar was known as gur or rab.

There were also few unsettled tribes, bodies of nomads or vagrants, who practice elementary industries, but who gain their livelihood principally by theft or other nefarious means but they do not contribute enough to deserve mention.

#### Conclusion

The brief survey of the effects of Industrial Revolution upon the trade of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh brings out that the impact of Industrial revolution under the British rule was in sharp contrast to its influence on the village economy as well as on the towns of the provinces. In England, the Industrial Revolution did cause unemployment in the rural areas, but the unemployed labour was soon absorbed by the new industries. The period of suffering was short. Moreover, the destruction of the old order was being compensated by the growth of new order of efficient and large scale production. But in India, the impact of Industrial Revolution meant the destruction of Indian handicrafts, but there was no substantial growth of modern factory industry. Consequently, a process of decline, ruralisation or deindustrialisation set in.

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