

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF COTTAGE INDUSTRIES IN INDIA : A STUDY IN PRE- INDEPENDENCE ERA

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Abstract:

Cottage industries in India have a great contribution to Indian economy. But these industries started developing from the very ancient time. The objectives of the present paper are to trace the origin and development of cottage industries in India. This work is based on the research work of the author. Various manuscripts, monographs and classic books as primary sources are the basis of the research work. The work highlights how the industries developed gradually till achieving the Independence in India. The market of cottage goods in foreign countries has been studied in a lucid manner. Reasons behind the decline of the industries during the first three decades of the nineteenth century have been traced under the study. The study concludes that the ancient cottage industries helped India to establish trade relations with foreign countries. The mills and the factories were not in existence in any part of India in early days.

[Key words: Ancient India, British rule, Christian era, Cottage industries, India, medieval India, origin of cottage industries, trade relation]

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0. INTRODUCTION

Indian Cottage industry is generally unorganized sector and falls under the category of small scale industry (presently small, micro and medium enterprises). The industry produces consumable products by use of conventional methods. Such type of industries originates usually in the country sides where unemployment and under-employment are widespread. The Cottage Industries in India are destined to play a significant role in the economic development of the country while keeping in view the potential for employment generation, preservation of cultural heritage and the dispersal of industrial activity into the backward regions. This industry affords great potential for exports and employment generation. The industry is particularly an export-oriented as more than 90% of its total production is exported to many foreign countries.

Every region in our country abounds in beautiful handicrafts, handlooms, carpets, etc. Freedom Tree attempts to help keep some of these crafts in the limelight by sourcing its products from rural artisans and craftsmen across the country. Cottage industries involves less number of people as labourers who may or may not be the members of one family and production or manufacturing of goods are produced by the traditional artisans and craftsmen who have inherited their work as an art from their ancestors. Their various goods produced include dress fabrics such as khadi, wool, muslin, leather, silk, cotton etc, & many precious items like jewellery, ornaments, statues, idols, gems, stones, etc and also edible items like spices, oils, honey, etc have a huge demand not only within India but also in the foreign markets. Many Indian villagers are dependent on these occupations to earn their livelihoods. But when and where the cottage industries were set up or originated and gradually how these industries developed are the main concern of the present work.

1. OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the study are given below:

- i) To trace the origin of cottage industries in India
- ii) To know how the industries gradually developed
- iii) To reveal the period of time for the introduction of mills/factories

2. RESEARCH METHODS:

Opinions obtained towards the origin of cottage industries in India were reviewed. The work is based on the analysis of various primary and secondary sources. Various manuscripts, monographs, classic books were reviewed for the present study. The actual information sought in this regard have been given.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Before the introduction of British rule the cottage industries in India were varied and famous. India then was known as a manufacturing country. Embroidery, furniture making, gold and silver jewellery, leather goods, weaving-industry, various types of handicrafts and silk brocade were highly developed arts and crafts. Indigenous methods of production had been developed for smelting the iron ore and rural craftsmen had developed skills for producing exquisite artistic creation including inlay work and various items of daily use. Terracotta industry was highly developed in Bengal.

But the origin and history of cottage industries in India date back to the ancient times. There are ample evidences of the existence of cottage industries in the past. However, it is very difficult to pinpoint from where and when cottage articles were produced. Professor Weber remarked “The skill of the Indians in the production of delicate woven fabrics, in the mixing of colours, the working of metals and precious stones, the preparation of essences and in all manner of technical arts has from early times enjoyed a worldwide celebrity”. Indian workers had a particular technique of producing different cottage goods which had been appreciated by foreign travellers.

3.1 ORIGIN & DEVELOPMENT BEFORE CHRISTIAN ERA

The evidence shown in the research paper of Dr. Kundu demands that in the Neolithic Age (10000 B.C to 3000 B.C) the people manufactured tools and weapons with a high level of skill. They also learnt weaving cloth from wool and cotton. They also learnt the art of pottery. Initially pots were made by hand and later on they started to produce using potter’s wheel. They started manufacturing cloth by spinning cotton. These indicate the existence of weaving-industry, pottery industry and other cottage industries in that age. There is also evidence of the existence of various crafts in the Metal Age (4000 B.C). The artisans manufactured various tools and

instruments with the help of bronze and copper at their homes with the help of other members of the family. Axes, Swords, Spear-heads and various other objects made of copper had been found in different parts of the country. These articles had artistic beauty, sharpness and durability. Clay pots in the Metal Age were replaced by utensils made of metals. The people made cloth with cotton fabrics and wool. Some cloths were found to be well decorated with paints and colour. These artistic works today are so called block and batik printing.

There is also proof of the existence of cottage industries in ancient India about 3000 B.C there were trade relations between India and Babylon. On the bank of the Indus from the 3000 B.C. to 2000 B.C the people manufactured different types of articles out of bronze. In the Indus Valley civilization people used copper, tin, lead, shells, gold and silver, ivory, bones and faience for the manufacture of various articles. There is no evidence of the use of iron at that time. The people in this age had made remarkable progress in the pottery industry.

The pottery of the Indus Valley was generally produced with the help of a wheel. It is pointed out that the glazed potteries are the earliest example of its kind in the ancient World. The vessels were produced in different shapes of earth and these were used for domestic purposes by the people in the Indus. The clay pots were glazy and their shine is still there even today. Vessels made of copper, bronze and silver were also unearthed during the excavations but no iron vessels or pots were found. The potter, weaver, blacksmith, gold smith, ivory workers and stonecutters in the Indus Valley were technically highly skilled.

Another good example of the existence of cottage industries in ancient times is that tombs in Egypt were wrapped up by Indian muslin of the finest quality. These tombs were erected about 2000 B.C. According to Pliny there was trade between India and Italy and a huge amount of money of his country was absorbed by Indian manufacturers. The world famous Dacca muslin was known to the Greeks by the names of “Gangetika”. It was found that carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, potters and weavers were given exalted proper place in the Vedic Age. The Aryan Male used to work with the help of the female within the family to make different kinds of tools, ornaments, etc. The Vedic Aryans were technically more efficient in carpentry and in metal

work, making vessels of ayas, probably for domestic use. They also made gold jewellery, wove cloth, knew sewing, spinning and tanning, and made pottery.

The people learnt to mine and work iron. Iron was used by smiths to forge work tools and weapons, e.g. axes, swords, daggers, etc. in the 1000 B.C. The use of iron was of tremendous importance for the development of handicrafts. Artisans could make ample use of iron tools due to abundant availability of this metal.

There is evidence of the manufacturing of domestic products in the Nanda period (642-320 B.C). The later vedic books show that an experience of the use of metals has advance. The artisans produced two varieties of ayas; copper and iron. They also used lead, tin and silver work ayas. Various kinds of garments made of cotton, linen, silk and wool were worn. A linen robe used in the Rajasuya ceremony was embroidered with representations of ritual vessels. This indicates the existence of embroidery industry in those days. Besides these, iron knives, axes, daggers, needles, bricks, plates etc. were also produced in that period. Jewellery and earthenware industries were also famous. The Jatakas describes the organization of craftsmen in guilds, eighteen in number, including “the wood workers, the smiths, the leather dressers, the painters and the rest, experts in various crafts. Actually no one doubts about the existence of Indian art and crafts in different articles, e.g. wood carving, clay pots and clay modelling, cutting glass, ivory carving, weaving and metal works.

3.2 COTTAGE INDUSTRIES IN ANCIENT INDIA

Ancient India was reputed for the industrial skill of her people. At a time India’s crafts evoked admiration and gave rise to a considerable amount of trade with a large amount of profit. Various crafts were found under the Mauryas and the crafts gradually assumed the shape of cottage and small scale industries. R. Fick suggests that topography aided their development in as much as particular areas of a city were generally inhabited by all tradesmen of a certain craft. The artisans and craftsmen were systematically organized during the period of the Mauryas. These craftsmen and artisans were organized under guilds which began in the early Buddhist period and continued through the Mauryan period.

The term *Kammarawas* already in use as a designation of the higher craftsmen. Carpenter, iron-smiths and potters occupy their own villages. In the Mauryan period the arts of glass making and hard stone carving attained great perfection. Arrian states that various metal made articles were produced during the Mauryan period. These are bows, javelins, swords, etc. The metals such as iron, copper, lead, and certain precious metals like gold and silver were used to manufacture various objects at Hastinapur for domestic and military use. The copper bolt found on the Asokan pillar at Rampurana and the copper cast coins dated to the Mauryan period are further evidence of the use of this metal. Iron objects like knives, crappers, and adzes at the earlier levels of Bhir Mound were produced at the home of the artisans. The later level shows a wider range of production of weapons, tools, agricultural implements and household vessels. Evidence of the manufacture of jewellery articles was found at Hastinapur and at the site of Bhir Mound and these articles show high skill of the goldsmiths in the Mauryan period. The crafts like stone cutting and different works designed on stone were of great artistic beauty. But the uses of these objects were confined to certain people due to there being highly expensive. Wooden furniture became popular in the period of Asoka as it was a cheaper material and had been used extensively. A wooden palisade surrounding the Pataliputra was the good example of existence of carpenters. The crafts like ivory work, bone work were in evidence during the period. The guild of wood workers had been one of the more active guilds. Textile industry was an important cottage industry during the Mauryan period. Cotton was used to make so strong fabrics and fine that a whole dress could be put through a small ring.

These cotton fabrics were manufactured at Madhura, Kalinga, Vanga, Mahisa and Aparanta. Out of various fabrics a huge quantity of 'dukula', a soft and fine textile and the 'Ksauma', were manufactured. Wool was produced to make woollen items like blankets and other woollen fabrics. Fine materials of cotton, wool, linen and also silk were woven and the art of the printing on cotton cloth was practiced during this period.

There is much evidence of the pottery industries during the Mauryan period. Earthenware pottery was commonly used by most of the people. It was found that the black polished earthenware was used by the rich men of the Mauryan period. The pottery consisted of varieties of ware. The most sophisticated technique is known as the Northern Black Polished (N.B.P.) ware. Various types of

coarse red and grey ware were found. The N.B.P ware was made of levitated clay with grey and a red hue. The ware was used for dishes and small bowls to a great extent. The original place of manufacturing this ware has not been ascertained till now. Some historians tend to refer it in the central Ganges close to Kausambi and Patna. It has been suggested by many historians that Eastern Rajasthan, Western, Central and Eastern India were famous for export of this ware through traders. The N. B. P. ware was highly expensive as it was coated with copper pins. But the technique of producing this ware has not yet been found and it is still not known how the technique came into existence in India during this period. Evidence of N. B. P. ware in the form of shreds at Bhir Mound in Taxila dating to C 800 B C suggests that it was used before the advent of the Greek black ware. At Rajgir, N.B.P. ware was found together with a plain black ware throughout the Mauryan period. Most of the other ware was in grey and red.

Terracotta articles in varied forms were found at Mauryan sites. It can be revealed from the discovery of these articles at Mauryan period at Ahicchatra that the terracotta modelling was stylized forms and highly developed technique. Terracotta from Taxila consists of primitive idols, toys, dice and beads. Although varied forms of earthen ware were found in the pre-Mauryan period, it can be said without a doubt that in the Mauryan period they were much more in regular use, and their technique developed into great heights of excellence.

Many industries were found in the Gupta period. Manufacturing of cloth, pottery, wooden articles, iron implements, etc. were the main industries of that time. There was no factory at that time. The economic condition of the Gupta period was influenced to a great extent by the development of craftsmanship. Amongst the artisans the most important was the carpenter because the demand of wooden articles in the Gupta era. Dharasena II of Valabhi in A.D 571-72 mentions of a special carpenter's plot. The village carpenter received the highest wages, followed by the blacksmiths, and then the village potters and the weavers in the Gupta period. Analysis of the Amarakosa shows that the village carpentry was developed in the Gupta age to a greater extent. The village potters produced the ordinary earthen pots used for water, rituals and cooking. The large sized vessels were manufactured mainly for storage of grain, whereas the smaller vessels were produced mostly to meet the local demand of the people at the time of *makara-sankranti*. The textile industry seems to have been highly developed during the Gupta

period. The clothing of the people of India required a variety of materials, e.g. muslin, silk, linen and wool. The Amarakosa has many words which are meant to indicate finer or coarser kinds of cloth, cloth for bed covers, cloth for male and female garments, etc. The textile industry was mainly located in Gujarat and many places of Deccan. In addition, the iron industry was also an important cottage industry during the Gupta age. The blacksmiths produced knives, sickles, axes, etc. to a great extent. The Mehruali Iron Pillar found near KutabMinar of Delhi is a unique evidence of the existence of the iron industry and reveals unparalleled skill of the workers. Ivory was used for making and adorning furniture, manufacture of seals, etc.

3.3 COTTAGE INDUSTRIES IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

But the Indian industries received a set back during the 12th century when Marco-Polo, an Italian visitor came to India and described the Indian muslins as “In sooth they look like tissues of a spider’s web; there is neither king nor queen in the world but might be glad to wear them. The greatest industry in the 14th century was textile. It has been suggested that there was huge improvement in cotton production technology through the introduction of the spinning wheel. The woman worked with the *charkha* to produce cloth. The *charkha* came to India with the Muslims and became popular by the mid-fourteenth century. After the advent of this instrument the production of cloth and the spinner’s efficiency increased. One cannot be sure whether any improvements of weaver’s looms were incorporated during 13th to 15th century. Various kinds of cloth were manufactured with varieties of names. A coarser (*kamina*) kind of cotton cloth worn by the poor was named ‘pat’. A little superior kind of cloth was manufactured in Delhi by Turks and soldiers. This type of cloth was named as *mahin*. As compared to this the finest was *barik* which was costlier. Besides, there were several varieties of muslin like *Shirinbaft*, *Salahati*, *Bhairon* and *Devhiri* (from Devagiri). The last two varieties were so fine and expensive that these were mainly used by the rich people. Bengal and Gujarat produced considerable amounts of fine cotton fabrics.

The weaving of silk as in the Juz cloth woven at Delhi and Koila and of cotton-silk mixed as in *Mashru* were much produced. Silk weaving in its finest level was taken to Gujarat. It has been suggested that Gujarat had a great reputation for its gold and silver embroidery.

The shawl industry of Kashmir was popular before the thirteenth century. The woollen manufacture and carpet weaving derived tremendous impetus from patronage of the Sultanate ruling class and its tastes were influenced by the fashions of Iran and central Asia.

The textile industry was organized mainly at home and most of the workers were women. The workers worked with their looms (*kargah*). In Muhammad Tughluq's *skarkhanas* at Delhi, there were four thousand silk workers who wove and embroidered different kinds of cloth. Firuz Tughluq's *skarkhana*, manufacturing cloth, met orders for 6,00,000 *tankas* worth of cloth every winter.

The Indian swords were famous all over the world. According to Fakhr-I-Mudabbir, the most costly and rarest Indian damascene sword was *maujdarya*. Another kind of sword was made of soft iron alloyed with copper and silver and still another was made of steel. Southern India was famous for both its copper mines and its bronze and brass industry. The Geniza record shows that large quantities of copper, lead and other ingredients of that industry were imported to India from the countries of the West and that old vessels and implements of all descriptions were sent from Aden to India and were worked into new utensils according to order. The Indian industry was so highly esteemed that the Adenese merchants took the trouble and the risk to order vessels from India rather than from Yemenite coppersmiths. The Indian cotton fabrics were traded in considerable quantities. Many cottage industries received a set back until the early period of the sixteenth century due to Muslim conquests in India. But these were revived after the establishment of the Mughal Empire.

Cottage industries including agro-based cottage industries like sugar cane, oil pressing, food grains, opium, indigo, wine and tobacco constituted a characteristic feature of rural economy during the Mughal period. The cottage industries were given importance in those days.

Corn was threshed mainly by the women with their hands, as there was usually no organized corn threshing industry in the sixteenth century. Flour-milling and rice-husking were in general a purely domestic industry in those days. The sugar cane growers produced various forms of sugar cane products with hand mills and sometimes with wooden rollers by the help of bullocks or

yoked oxen. Powder sugar i.e. a fine grained type, was an important type of sugar cane products. This industry flourished in Bengal, Malabar and in some other parts of India. Besides the other forms of sugar cane products like brown sugar, *nabat*, *jaggery* and *gur*, etc. were manufactured in the Mughal period. Gur was manufactured by the cane growers with their own cane-press and furnace. The oil pressing industry was probably carried on by oilmen namely *telis* and the oil were produced by the bullock driven traditional stone presses as seen even in the present day. This industry was famous in Sind, Orissa, Gujarat, Golkonda, Bengal, etc.

3.4 COTTAGE INDUSTRIES DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD

Tobacco production was unknown till the end of Akbar's reign. But after the coming of pilgrims during his time the tobacco leaf was obtained in Gujarat in the year 1613 but the process of manufacturing was still unknown. It became accepted and popular to the rich people during the reign of Jahangir and Sahajahan and spread to the poorer classes at the time of Aurangzeb. The leaf was exported to Mocha, Arakan and Pegu. This industry was famous in Surat, Behar and Cormondel Coast.

The indigo industry was an unimportant industry before the seventeenth century. As far as commercial point of view is concerned it was used only for internal consumption then like dyeing various kinds of cloths. Indigo was manufactured generally in those centres where the cotton industry was highly famous. But in the 17th century it was demanded in European countries due to its being used as a blue dye in the woollen industry. A large quantity of Indigo was exported from western India to Portuguese, Lisbon, Holland and Spain.

The handicrafts products were very much in demand throughout the Mughal period ranging from furniture, tailoring perfumery, leather work, jewellery, conch shell articles, pottery, soap or luxury goods. These articles were produced by the artisans in their cottages with the cooperation of all family members and the artisans like blacksmith, carpenters, tailors, potters, jewelers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, leather workers, soap makers, etc. They produced a varied form of handicrafts goods with highly skilful and artistic beauty. However, a small portion of these products were produced in *karkhanas* by assembling the craftsmen in different fields of work and

they were placed in charge of a *malik* over whom there was the state general superintendent of Arts and Crafts.

Metal industries were in existence during the Mughal reign. Cutting instruments for domestic use, swords and other arms were in much demand. But owing to the high price of copper and iron the products made from these metals were used only by the rich section of the community. The wood made furniture was also not accepted in those days to a great extent owing to high cost of finished goods. Wood was comparatively cheaper but the transport problem made it rise in price and subsequently the wood furniture was beyond the reach of the poorer classes. These were used by the Portuguese, Dutch, and English. But with extensive forests and large areas of uncultivated land, wood was more easily obtainable for house building and the manufacture of different instruments used for agriculture. The main wood made products like bedstead, chests, stools, ornamental boxes, ink-stands were in great demand. Leather goods were manufactured in small quantities in the Mughal period. India was self-contained in this industry but there was less demand for shoes, boots and well buckets, saddler and hides owing to their less use by the common people in those days. Multan and Lahore were famous for boots and shoes. Thus the main market for the leather goods was relatively smaller in proportion to the population and exports were unimportant. But after the Akbar reign this industry had been developed.

The handmade paper was used in those days throughout Southern India. Palm leaves were used as late as 1625 for writing. The handmade cam bay paper was made at various places of Northern India to little use by the people due to a large portion of people being illiterate or of low standard of education.

The pottery industry was a popular industry in the 16th and 17th centuries. The earthenware products especially earthen vessels were commonly used due to the high cost of metal vessels which were very scarcely used by the bulk of the population. Hence, the market of earthenware products was larger. But in the late 17th century this industry was not progressive. The Muslims used porcelain imported from China. Bihar produced fine pottery in the 17th century and these were used only by the nobles who constituted a meagre portion of the total population. Rural potters sold their earthenware in terms of cash in Malabar in the 1st half of the 16th century.

Another cottage industry though little used was building industry. The use of brick and stone was smaller than it is today. The masses lived in the houses made of mud or reed, thatched or sometimes tiled roof. However, different kinds of artisans in connection with this industry were in existence. They were wood carvers, timber-sewers, brick makers, stone cutters, lime-makers, etc. and engaged in building several forts, palaces, houses, temples, ships, etc.

The value of these handicrafts depended on their artistic merit and skill. The market was created according to the needs of the local inhabitants and the foreigners.

The textile industries consisting of silk, wool, jute, cotton were most important of Indian industries. But the weaving industry was affected by the British policy during Mughal period. Sericulture was an old agro-based cottage industry in India. Although it was assumed to be minor one in the 16th century, it was in a flourishing state in a few centers like Ahmedabad, Kashmir, Bengal and Bihar. Akbar encouraged the foreign artisans to improve silk weaving. Gujarat was famous in producing finished silk articles. However, Bengal came to be the leading centre in producing the maximum quantity in the 17th century. The cultivator produced mulberry plants, bred silkworms, reared and cocoons in Kashimbazar, Murshidabad and Malda in Bengal. The weavers with the help of their women produced different types of cloths. Bengal alone exported annually 22,000 bales of silk at the end of the 16th century. The industry developed under the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Indian silk was exported to Japan and many European countries. The production of carpets, velvets, satins and taffetas mixed with silk and gold threads were reputed in Surat and Ahmadabad. The handloom weaving industry survived due to production of mixed goods made with silk and wool. Every weaver's house was a textile industry and there was no village without having weaving centres.

Unorganized sector was developed in the 16th century as wool was obtained from different animals like sheep, camel, goats, and angoras. But this was not of good quality and used mainly to manufacture blankets. Woollen goods of artistic merit were produced by importing fine wool from Tibet and Himalayan areas and these were used mainly by the upper classes while the poorer section used ordinary blankets and garments. Woollen cloth was used extensively in Northern India. Akbar preferred the woollen dresses.

The carpet and shawl weaving industries received royal patronage during Akbar's regime. Due to Akbar's influence many shawl industries were established at Lahore. Foreign carpet weavers became inhabitants of Agra, Fatehpur-Sikri and Lahore.

Almost all Mughal provinces were reputed for hemp production whereas Bengal grew jute. Diverse jute products were manufactured in the huts of the people. Ropes were manufactured in the 16th century and used for packing silk. But due to increase of trade the demand for sacks had grown and the artisans produced sacks locally.

Cotton weaving industry was carried on by the professional artisans including women of weaver families of the villages as well as the towns. The cotton cloth was produced not only for domestic purposes but also for trade. The spinning and weaving constituted the two important domestic cottage industries in those days. Their works were done by hand with the help of Charkha and the wooden loom. The weaving industry (articles made of cotton) of India had a large market in Britain. Most of the artisans were women and the industry was set up in Dinajpur of Bengal, Bhagalpur of Bihar. Gradually this industry grew at different centers in India like Gujarat, Mysore, Kashimbazar. The rural agriculturists tended to become urban weaver-craftsmen.

Bleaching of cloth was done by dhobis or washer men and this industry was established in Bengal (Sonargaon, Dacca), Bihar (Patna), Gujarat (Surat, Ahmedabad). But European people was not satisfied about this industry of then period and consequently dyeing was a subsidiary industry done by dyers of *rangrej*. Cloth could be printed by applying colour on the cloth with a pen or brush by hand or qalamkar as in Golkonda.

Printed cloth was manufactured in Golkonda, Nizam-patam, Narsapur, Armagon, Madra, etc. The artisans engaged in these industries were very efficient and famous. All the members of the family including children helped the artisans in producing cotton cloth. The artisans produced cotton cloth, red salu and chintz in Delhi; various types of cotton goods and cotton carpets in Agra and Fatehpur-sikri; linen and coarse goods, mercools, gauzes in Lucknow; white calicoes, carpets, girdles in Jaunpur; thick stuffs in Jalalabad; coarse painted calicoes, various forms of

carpets, coarse cloth in Bihar. At the end of the 17th century various cotton goods like clothing coverlets, rugs, ropes, bed tapes including *niwar*, packing carpets, and furnishing were produced by the rural weavers in different parts of India. But these industries declined after the first half of the 18th century due to the Maratha raids and disorders in the Persian Gulf. However, Bengal was the most important centre to produce cotton cloth in the mid-18th century and cotton manufacture was recognized as national cottage industry of Bengal. The cotton cloth was gradually developed with much fashion as the market was opened for cotton cloth with embroidery of gold and silver. The gold and silver embroidered cloth was exported to Armenia and Europe.

Forest based cottage industries were set up in the 16th and 17th centuries. The wood made articles and bamboo products were in great demand. The bamboos of Bengal were used to manufacture ships and various articles for domestic use. Lac industry was an important industry in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Gujarat, Malwa, Bijapur and Malabar. Lac was cultivated by the agriculturists and gum lac was used to manufacture women's bangles, various toys, furniture, doors and windows and painted cloth. The best and cheapest lac was found in Bengal abundantly.

Different types of cottage industries earned repute various centers in India during the Mughal period. The products of a few important centers are recorded below.

- i) Delhi was famous for producing cotton cloths of various colours;
- ii) Lahore came to manufacture fine white cloths, carpets, various woollen goods, bows, saddles, swords, boots and shoes; White cloths, silk stuffs, lace, gold and silver embroideries on turbans were manufactured in Agra;
- iii) Patna was well known for the production of silk and cotton goods, artistic pottery and saltpetre;
- iv) Benaras was reputed in producing muslins, gold and silver embroideries, etc.
- v) Dacca produced finest muslins;
- vi) Gold and silver jewellery, silk cloths were manufactured in Ahamedabad;
- vii) Srinagar manufactured varieties of carpets and shawls, bedspreads, ink boxes, trays, wooden spoons.

So far as these cottage industries are concerned, it is owing to them that the income of the population had substantially increased in the Mughal period.

Unfortunately after the establishment of British power in the second half of the 18th century the Indian cottage industries declined due to adverse policy taken by the British government. However, the weavers of cotton piece goods contributed the Bengal's economy to a great extent, before 1757. But after it the handloom industry declined due to the fact that the weavers had to work against their will at an arbitrarily process imposed upon them. The famine of 1770 gave a mystery to the cotton weaving industry. The cotton growers, spinners and the weavers died in large number during this incidence. The price of cotton cloth steadily rose, but the demand of this product was steadily rising in Bengal. The court of Directors took necessary steps for the betterment of weaving industry. The weavers of Bengal manufactured many varieties of cotton cloths and silk cloths. But the weavers and spinners were not learnt about the development of this industry till the end of the 18th century.

No attempt was made to encourage the cultivators to produce opium during the Mughal period. But in the second half of the 18th century it was an important agro-based cottage industry. In 1793-94 the profit coming from the production of opium was to the tune of rupees 19 lakh.

England started trade in India and the cottage industries of India faced tough competition with the English handicrafts. The cheaper products with artistic beauty came from England to India. The textile industries still occupied a position as national industry of India. In the first four years of the 19th century, in spite of all prohibitions and restrictive duties 6 to 15 thousand bales of cotton piece goods were annually exported from Calcutta to the United Kingdom. Cotton weaving, silk weaving, cotton spinning and silk reeling were common occupation to most parts of Bengal. The Dacca muslin was exported to England.

The potter industry, weaving industry, black smithy, dyeing & bleaching were important industries in Southern India during the early 19th century. Indigo was used for dyeing, leather tanning was a paying industry and coconut oil was largely manufactured in many houses. Coarse

muslin and certain varieties of thick cloths were the principal manufactures in Northern Mysore in the first seven years of the 19th century.

The cottage industries in varieties of forms especially spinning and weaving industries were found in Northern India and some districts of Bengal between 1808 to 1815. Dr. Buchanan estimated 330,426 women weavers in Bihar district, 159000 women weavers in Shahabad district in 1807. Handmade paper, leather work, perfumery, iron-work, gold and silvers work, stone cutting, pottery, brick-laying, dyeing, blanket-weaving and the manufacture of gold and silver thread and cloth were among other important industries in Behar, Shahabad, Bhagalpur districts. Goldsmiths, carpenters, workers in the bidri (smoking item) and other metals, blacksmiths, dyers were among industrial classes of Purniya.

Spinning and weaving were the great national industries during the early 19th century. Cotton weavers wove various forms of articles with the help of looms. The total number of looms employed in the manufacture of table-cloths or chadars was 750 in 1808 and the value of annual production was Rs.5,40,000 leaving a profit of Rs.81,400 deducting the value of thread. The number of women weavers employed in spinning was 1,59,500 in Shahabad district and they produced thread to the value of Rs.12,50,000 a year.

Bhagalpur district was also famous in producing cotton carpets, tapes, tent ropes, chintz and blankets. In 1808 Dr. Buchanan estimated 7279 looms in Bhagalpur district. Besides the cotton industry, there were other cottage industries like bracelets of coarse glass, leather-tanning, iron work and carpentering, pottery, stone-cutting, gold and silver works. Carpenters of Gorakhpur contributed a huge amount to the national income. They produced doors, windows, carts, agricultural implements, palanquins, boxes, etc.

Cotton spinning attracted almost all the women of higher rank families as well as the farmers' wives during the early 19th century in Dinajpur district. The women used their leisure times in spinning industry. They produced Malda cloth made of silk warp and cotton woof with the help of 4000 looms. The cloth made of silk was produced to the value of Rs.12,000, whereas pure

cotton cloths were produced only in Malda and the whole cotton cloths woven in the district was valued at Rs.16,74,000.

The Indian cottage industries declined between 1790 and 1813 due to adverse policy taken by the East India Company. Even so, during 1815 – 1826 a few cottage industries like coconut oil, liquid extracts and essences, horns, ropes, matting, articles made of leather, wood, china and clay, walking sticks with tops or heads worked in gold or silver etc. were exported to England. Between 1813 and 1832, the import duties on these products were reduced or increased according to the needs of the Englishmen. Again different cottage industries in India faced certain difficulties due to the policy of prohibition to sale the articles in England by imposition of law till 1826. The first affected industry was muslin. In 1801 the cloth investment in Dacca and Bengal was reduced. The calicos were exported in little quantities but gradually came to discontinue. Trevelyan gives an estimate of displacement in the foreign market as well as in the home market.

Table 1: Estimate of import and export of cotton goods during the first half of the 19th century.

Years	Cotton GoodsExported (Rs.)	Cotton goodsImported (Rs.)
1813-14	5291458	9070
1814-15	8490760	45000
1815-16	13151427	263800
1816-17	16594380	317602
1820-21	8540763	2559642
1825-26	5834638	4124159
1830-31	857280	6012729
1831-32	849887	4564047
1832-33	822891	4264707

The Indian handloom industry progressed again since 1830 and the production of silk cloth increased till 1940. The Indian silk cloth was allowed to export in England since 1833 due to decrease in production of British silk cloth. The table-2 shows that the total value of silk cloth

produced in England was Rs.50,000 and in India it was Rs.29,500. But the value of British silk cloth was Rs.36,000 in 1833, Rs.16,800 in 1835 and Rs.5,500 in 1839 where as the value of Indian silk cloth was Rs.60,800 in 1833, Rs.1,14,400 in 1835 and Rs.1,68,900 in 1839.

Table 2: Comparison of production of silk cloth between England and India

Year	Production in England	Production in India
1830	50,000	29,500
1833	36,000	60,800
1835	16,800	1,14,400
1839	5,500	1,68,900

But the silk industry of Bengal declined after the second half of the 19th century. The ship and boat building industries became popular in the first half of the 19th century in India. During 1781-1821, 235 ships were manufactured in Calcutta. The raw materials were imported from Nepal, Pegu, Bhutan (timber), England, Europe, America (metal parts). The boats were built in India at the same time as ships. But due to the development of Indian roads and railways the boat and ship industries declined during the second half of the 19th century.

In the inter war period almost 3 to 3.5 million persons were engaged in the cotton, silk and wool spinning and weaving industries. The mills employed about 10 per cent of this total. The remaining used mainly hand tools and was organized in household or very small factories. Tanned hide became a major export item in the late nineteenth century. Even from 1870s down to the Great Depression it remained a major export items. Tanning was originally a rural craft trained under certain supervision. The organization related to this industry was made by a single household or a kind of collective labour not found in other crafts.

The highly skilled crafts were employed in different industries in North Indian towns due to the patronage of pre-British local rulers. The most important among the skilled crafts were woollen carpets, engraved brass-ware, wood carving, ivory-carving, jewellery, decorated pottery, shawls, etc. The industries existed in the late 19th and in the early 20th centuries because of the consumption of the rich persons residing in Delhi, Agra, Amritsar, Lahore, Multan, Srinagar, Lucknow, Moradabad, Farrukabad, Benaras, but after the 1st world war the Provincial

Governments adopted a step-motherly attitude to these industries. However, the bulk of the masses were engaged in the unorganized sector till the middle of the 20th century. The handloom cotton industry is supposed to have been destroyed during the 19th century due to the tough competition of machine manufacture. But the estimate in connection with the production and consumption of cotton in India shows different notion. As late as 1905 i.e. 50 years of development of the modern cotton textile industry in India handlooms occupied 63.3 percent of the total production of the cotton piece goods in the country. An even more striking fact is that the handloom sector accounted for 35 percent of the total consumption in India.

4. CONCLUSION

Since ancient times in the country many indigenous cottage products have always been able to attract foreign traders and merchants. These helped India in successfully establishing trade relations with the Greek, Chinese and Arab merchants. Even during the period of medieval India, Indian craftsmen and artisans flourished well under the rule of the Turk, Afghan and Mughal dynasties. But from the advent of the East India Company, there was a drastic change in the running of these cottage industries. For an urge to have more luxury items at the cheapest prices, the European traders and merchants exploited the Indian peasants to great extent due to which these cottage industries witnessed a severe lash to their production. Later the Industrial revolution in the West also gave a fatal blow to their economy and led to considerable decline in the number.

It is thus established that Indian industries were in a flourishing sector before the early 19th century. The mills and the factories were not in existence in any part of India in early days. But even after the factories came into existence the cottage industry began to decline till 1830 due to the adverse policies imposed by the British government on Indian industries. However, the golden days backed to Indian cottage industries when British withdrew the imposition of duties and tariff on export goods and the cottage industries began to progress from 1831.

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