Write in Brief

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

(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) The trade and commerce guild controlled the market, raw materials, employees, and also production of goods in the towns. This created problems for merchants who wanted to increase production by employing more men. Therefore, they turned to peasants and artisans who lived in villages.

(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 English East India Company appointed Gomasthas for:

- To eliminate the existence of traders and brokers and establish a direct control over the weavers.

- To eliminate weavers from dealing with other buyers by means of advances and control. In this manner, weavers who took loans and fees in advance were obligated to the British.

(e) 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.
False

(b) The international market for fine textiles was dominated by India till the eighteenth century.
True

(c) The American Civil War resulted in the reduction of cotton exports from India.
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(d) The introduction of the fly shuttle enabled handloom workers to improve their productivity.
True

3. Explain what is meant by proto-industrialisation.

Answer

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
1. Why did some industrialists in nineteenth-century Europe prefer hand labour over machines?
Answer
Some industrialists in nineteenth-century Europe prefer hand labour over machines because:

- Machines were costly, ineffective, difficult to repair, and needed huge capital investments.
- Labour was available at low wages at that period of time.
- In seasonal industries only seasonal labour was required.
- Market demands of variety of designs and colour and specific type could not be fulfilled by machine made clothes. Intricate designs and colours could be done by human-skills only.
- In Victorian age, the aristocrats and other upper class people preferred articles made by hand only.

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

Answer

The English East India Company used different means to procure silk and cotton from the weavers:

- Appointment of paid supervisors called Gomasthas. They also collected supplies and examined cloth quality of the weavers.
- Prevention of Company weavers from dealing with other buyers through a system of advances and loans.

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

Britain and the History of Cotton

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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.

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

Answer

India witnessed increased industrial production during the First World War due to following reasons:

- British industries became busy in producing and supplying war-needs. Hence, they stopped exporting British goods or clothes for colonial markets like that in India.
- It was a good opportunity for Indian industries to fill in empty Indian markets with their products. It was done so. Therefore, industrial production in India increased.
- Also the British colonial government asked Indian factories to supply the war needs like – jute bags, cloth or army uniforms, tents and leather boots, horse and mule saddle, etc.
- The increased demands of variety of products led to the setting up of new factories and old ones increased their production.
- Many new workers were employed and everyone was made to work longer hours.

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