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## History

### The age of industrialisation

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### The Age of Indian Textiles

In India, silk and cotton goods dominated the international market in textiles, before the age of machine industries. A variety of Indian merchants and bankers were involved in this network of export trade – financing production, carrying goods and supplying exporters. By the 1750s this network, controlled by Indian merchants, was breaking down. The European companies came into power – first securing a variety of concessions from local courts, then the monopoly rights to trade. The shift from the old ports to the new ones was an indicator of the growth of colonial power. European companies controlled trade through the new ports and were carried in European ships. Many old trading houses collapsed, and those who wanted to survive had to operate within a network shaped by European trading companies.

## What Happened to Weavers?

After the 1760s, the consolidation of the East India Company did not initially lead to a decline in textile exports from India. Before establishing political power in Bengal and Carnatic in the 1760s and 1770s, the East India Company had found it difficult to ensure a regular supply of goods for export. After the East India Company established political power, it developed a system of management and control that would eliminate competition, control costs, and ensure regular supplies of cotton and silk goods. It was established by following a series of steps.

- a) By eliminating existing traders and brokers connected with the cloth trade, and establishing more direct control over the weaver.
- b) By preventing Company weavers from dealing with other buyers.

The weavers were granted a loan to buy the raw materials once an order was placed. Weavers who took loans needed to hand over the cloth they produced to the gomastha. Weaving required the labour of the entire family, with children and women all engaged in different stages of the process. Earlier, supply merchants had a very close relationship with weavers, but new gomasthas were outsiders with no social link with the village.

In many places in Carnatic and Bengal, weavers set up looms in other villages where they had some family relation. In other places, weavers along with the village traders revolted, opposing the Company and its officials. Over time many weavers began refusing loans, closing down their workshops and taking to agricultural labour. By the turn of the nineteenth century, cotton weavers faced a new set of problems.

### Manchester Comes to India

In 1772, Henry Patullo said that the demand for Indian textiles could never reduce since no other nation produced goods of the same quality. But, unfortunately, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, India witnessed a decline in textile exports. In the early nineteenth century, exports of British cotton goods increased dramatically. At the end of the eighteenth century, import of cotton piece-goods was restricted into India. In India cotton weavers faced two problems:

Their export market collapsed

Local market shrank and glutted with Manchester imports.

By the 1860s, weavers faced a new problem. They could not get sufficient supply of raw cotton of good quality. Even the raw cotton exports from India increased due to which the price increased. By the end of the nineteenth century, other craftspeople faced yet another problem. Factories in India began production, flooding the market with machine-goods.

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