Class 10 History Chapter 4: The Age of Industrialisation - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These The Age of Industrialisation Class 10 notes cover Class 10 History Chapter 4 completely: proto-industrialisation, the coming of the factory, the slow pace of industrial change, hand labour and steam power, the lives of workers, the age of Indian textiles, what happened to weavers, Manchester imports, the rise of factories in India, early entrepreneurs, workers and jobbers, the peculiarities of industrial growth, small-scale industries and advertising.

You also get key data tables, a timeline, a comparison of industrialisation in Britain and India, NCERT-style questions with answers, 10 MCQs and a free PDF with no signup.

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Chapter Overview

Images of the early twentieth century, such as E.T. Paull’s ‘Dawn of the Century’ and a trade magazine picture contrasting Aladdin with a modern mechanic, celebrated machines and technology as signs of progress. The chapter questions this triumphant view and asks what industrialisation really meant for people’s lives.

It looks first at Britain, the first industrial nation, where hand labour and small workshops remained important long after factories appeared, and then at India, where colonial rule shaped the pattern of industrial change, destroying the old textile trade, while Indian

Important Topics and Concepts

Before the Industrial Revolution: proto-industrialisation

- Even before factories, there was large-scale production for an international market. Historians call this phase proto-industrialisation.
- In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, merchants moved to the countryside because powerful urban crafts and trade guilds controlled production, prices and entry into trades in towns.
- Enclosure of common lands made poor peasants and cottagers look for new income, so they gladly accepted advances from merchants to produce goods.
- Proto-industrial work let them stay in the countryside, supplement shrinking farm incomes and use all family labour.
- A merchant clothier bought wool from a wool stapler, gave it to spinners, then weavers, fullers and dyers; finishing was done in London, a finishing centre. Each merchant controlled hundreds of workers.

The coming up of the factory

- The earliest factories in England came up by the 1730s, but they multiplied only in the late eighteenth century.
- Cotton was the first symbol of the new era: Britain’s raw cotton imports rose from 2.5 million pounds in 1760 to 22 million pounds in 1787.
- Inventions improved carding, twisting and spinning, and rolling, increasing output per worker and producing stronger thread.
- Richard Arkwright created the cotton mill, bringing all processes under one roof and management, which allowed careful supervision, quality control and regulation of labour.

The pace of industrial change

- Cotton was the leading sector until the 1840s; then iron and steel led, with railways expanding in England from the 1840s and in the colonies from the 1860s. By 1873 Britain’s iron and steel exports were worth about £77 million, double its cotton exports.
- New industries could not easily displace traditional ones: at the end of the nineteenth century, less than 20 per cent of the workforce was in technologically advanced sectors.
- Traditional industries such as food processing, building, pottery, glass, tanning and furniture grew through small innovations.
- Technology spread slowly because machines were expensive, broke down often and were costly to repair. James Watt improved Newcomen’s steam engine and patented it in 1781, but at the start of the nineteenth century there were only 321 steam engines in England.
- The typical mid-nineteenth-century worker was a traditional craftsperson or labourer, not a machine operator.

Hand labour and steam power

- Victorian Britain had plenty of labour, so wages were low and industrialists did not want costly machines that replaced workers.

- Many industries were seasonal (gas works, breweries, book-binders, printers, ship repair), so industrialists preferred hand labour employed for the season.
- Many products needed human skill: Britain produced 500 varieties of hammers and 45 kinds of axes.
- The upper classes preferred handmade goods as symbols of refinement and class; machine-made goods were exported to the colonies.
- In countries with labour shortage, such as America, industrialists preferred mechanical power.

Life of the workers

- Getting a job depended on friends and relatives in factories; many job-seekers waited weeks, sleeping under bridges, in night refuges or in Casual Wards run by the Poor Law authorities.
- Seasonal work meant long periods without work. Wages rose a little in the early nineteenth century, but prices rose during the Napoleonic Wars, so real wages fell.
- About 10 per cent of the urban population were extremely poor; in slumps like the 1830s, unemployment rose to 35–75 per cent.
- Fear of unemployment made workers hostile to new technology. When the Spinning Jenny (James Hargreaves, 1764) came into the woollen industry, women hand spinners attacked the machines.
- After the 1840s, building activity (roads, railway stations, tunnels, drains) created more jobs; transport workers doubled in the 1840s and doubled again in the next 30 years.

The age of Indian textiles

- Before machine industries, Indian silk and cotton goods dominated the world market, especially the finer varieties.
- Armenian and Persian merchants carried goods from Punjab to Afghanistan, eastern Persia and Central Asia over land.
- By sea, Surat linked India to the Gulf and Red Sea ports, and Masulipatam and Hoogly linked it to Southeast Asia.
- Supply merchants gave advances to weavers and carried cloth to ports, where brokers dealt with export merchants.
- By the 1750s, European companies gained concessions and monopoly rights; Surat and Hoogly declined while Bombay and Calcutta grew. Trade through Surat fell from Rs 16 million in the late seventeenth century to Rs 3 million by the 1740s.

What happened to weavers?

- After establishing political power in Bengal and Carnatic in the 1760s and 1770s, the East India Company asserted a monopoly on trade.
- It appointed a paid servant called the gomastha to supervise weavers, collect supplies and check quality.
- Through a system of advances, weavers who took loans had to sell only to the gomastha; many leased out their land to weave full time.
- Gomasthas were outsiders who acted arrogantly, came with sepoys and peons, and beat weavers for delays; prices paid to weavers were miserably low.
- Weavers in Carnatic and Bengal deserted villages, revolted along with village traders, or refused loans and became agricultural labourers.

Manchester comes to India

- In 1772, Company official Henry Patullo claimed demand for Indian textiles would never fall, yet decline soon began.
- Piece-goods fell from 33 per cent of India's exports in 1811–12 to only 3 per cent by 1850–51.
- British industrialists got import duties on foreign cotton textiles and persuaded the Company to sell British goods in India.
- Cotton piece-goods rose to over 31 per cent of the value of Indian imports by 1850 and over 50 per cent by the 1870s.
- Weavers faced a collapsed export market and a local market glutted with cheap Manchester goods.
- In the 1860s, the American Civil War cut US cotton supply, so Britain bought Indian raw cotton; prices shot up and weavers could not afford raw material. Later, Indian factories also flooded the market.

Factories come up in India

- The first cotton mill in Bombay came up in 1854 and started production two years later; by 1862 four mills had 94,000 spindles and 2,150 looms.
- The first jute mill in Bengal was set up in 1855, another in 1862.
- The Elgin Mill was started in Kanpur in the 1860s, and the first cotton mill of Ahmedabad a year later.
- The first spinning and weaving mill of Madras began production by 1874.

The early entrepreneurs

- Many business groups earned capital from the China trade in opium and tea.
- Dwarkanath Tagore of Bengal set up six joint-stock companies in the 1830s and 1840s.
- In Bombay, Parsis such as Dinshaw Petit and Jamsetjee Nusserwanjee Tata built industrial empires using profits from exports to China and raw cotton shipments to England. J.N. Tata set up the first iron and steel works at Jamshedpur in 1912.
- Seth Hukumchand, a Marwari businessman, set up the first Indian jute mill in Calcutta in 1917; G.D. Birla's father and grandfather also traded with China.
- Indian merchants were barred from trading with Europe in manufactures and edged out of shipping. Until the First World War, European Managing Agencies such as Bird Heiglers & Co., Andrew Yule and Jardine Skinner & Co. controlled large parts of Indian industry.

Where did the workers come from?

- Factory workers rose from 584,000 in 1901 to over 2,436,000 by 1946.
- Most came from nearby districts: over 50 per cent of Bombay cotton mill workers in 1911 came from Ratnagiri, and Kanpur mills drew from villages in Kanpur district.
- Workers moved between village and city, returning for harvests and festivals; later, workers from the United Provinces went to Bombay and Calcutta.
- Industrialists employed a jobber, usually an old and trusted worker, to recruit workers. The jobber gained authority, demanded money and gifts, and controlled workers' lives.

The peculiarities of industrial growth

- European Managing Agencies invested in tea and coffee plantations, mining, indigo and jute, mainly for export.

- Early Indian cotton mills produced coarse yarn rather than cloth to avoid competing with Manchester goods; the yarn was used by Indian handloom weavers or exported to China.
- In the early twentieth century, the swadeshi movement boycotted foreign cloth, industrialists demanded tariff protection, and after 1906 yarn exports to China fell, so Indian mills shifted to cloth. Cotton piece-goods production doubled between 1900 and 1912.
- The First World War reduced Manchester imports and created army demand for jute bags, uniforms, tents, boots and saddles; industrial production boomed and Manchester never regained its old position.

Small-scale industries predominate

- About 67 per cent of large industries in 1911 were in Bengal and Bombay.
- Only 5 per cent of the industrial workforce worked in registered factories in 1911 and 10 per cent in 1931; the rest worked in small workshops and households.
- Handloom cloth production almost trebled between 1900 and 1940.
- Weavers adopted the fly shuttle; by 1941 over 35 per cent of handlooms had it, and 70–80 per cent in Travancore, Madras, Mysore, Cochin and Bengal.
- Weavers of fine cloth (Banarasi and Baluchari saris, Madras lungis and handkerchiefs) survived better, as demand from the rich was stable and mills could not copy specialised weaves.

Market for goods: advertisements

- Manchester cloth bundles carried labels such as ‘MADE IN MANCHESTER’ as a mark of quality.
- Labels showed Indian gods and goddesses such as Krishna, Lakshmi and Saraswati, giving divine approval and making foreign goods seem familiar.
- From the late nineteenth century, manufacturers printed calendars, which even people who could not read hung in homes and tea shops.
- Figures of emperors and nawabs were used to create respect for products.
- Indian manufacturers used advertisements to spread the nationalist message of swadeshi: if you care for the nation, buy Indian goods.

Important Dates and Timeline

Revise these in order.

Year	Event
1730s	Earliest factories in England
1750s	Indian merchant network begins to break down
1760	Britain imports 2.5 million pounds of raw cotton
1760s–1770s	East India Company gains political power in Bengal and Carnatic
1764	James Hargreaves devises the Spinning Jenny
1772	Henry Patullo predicts Indian textile demand will never fall
1781	James Watt patents improved steam engine
1787	Britain imports 22 million pounds of raw cotton
1811–12	Piece-goods are 33% of India’s exports

Year	Event
1850–51	Piece-goods fall to 3% of India’s exports
1854	First cotton mill in Bombay
1855	First jute mill in Bengal
1860s	American Civil War; Elgin Mill, Kanpur
1873	British iron and steel exports worth £77 million
1874	First spinning and weaving mill of Madras
1912	J.N. Tata sets up iron and steel works at Jamshedpur
1914–1918	First World War boosts Indian industry
1917	Seth Hukumchand sets up first Indian jute mill in Calcutta

Industrialisation in Britain vs India

Use this table for comparison-type questions.

Aspect	Britain	Colonial India
Starting point	Proto-industrialisation, then factories from the 1730s	Strong handicraft textile trade, broken by colonial control
Leading sectors	Cotton (till 1840s), then iron and steel	Cotton yarn, jute, later cloth; plantations and mining by European agencies
Role of hand labour	Abundant cheap labour; seasonal hand work remained common	Handlooms survived and expanded with fly shuttles
Capital	Merchants and industrialists	China trade profits; European Managing Agencies controlled much industry
Workers	Migrants to cities; seasonal and casual work	Workers from nearby districts recruited by jobbers

Key Data on Indian Textiles and Industry

Indicator	Figure
Trade through Surat	Rs 16 million (late 17th century) to Rs 3 million (1740s)
Piece-goods share of India’s exports	33% (1811–12) to 3% (1850–51)
Cotton piece-goods share of India’s imports	Over 31% (1850), over 50% (1870s)
Bombay mills, 1862	4 mills, 94,000 spindles, 2,150 looms
Factory workers in India	584,000 (1901) to over 2,436,000 (1946)
Workforce in registered factories	5% (1911), 10% (1931)
Handlooms with fly shuttles, 1941	Over 35% (70–80% in some regions)
Handloom cloth production	Almost trebled, 1900–1940

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Orient	Countries to the east of the Mediterranean, usually Asia, seen from a western viewpoint as traditional and mysterious
Proto-industrialisation	Early phase of large-scale industrial production for an international market, not based on factories
Guild	Association of producers that trained craftspeople, controlled production and prices, and restricted entry into trade
Stapler	A person who sorts wool according to its fibre
Fuller	A person who gathers cloth by pleating
Carding	Preparing fibres such as cotton or wool before spinning
Spinning Jenny	Machine by James Hargreaves (1764) that let one worker spin several threads at once
Gomastha	Paid servant of the East India Company who supervised weavers and collected cloth
Sepoy	British pronunciation of sipahi, an Indian soldier in British service
Jobber	Trusted worker employed by industrialists to recruit new workers
Fly shuttle	Mechanical weaving device moved by ropes and pulleys that increased productivity per weaver
Managing Agency	European firm that mobilised capital, set up and managed joint-stock companies in India

Short Answer Questions

Q1. Explain proto-industrialisation.

Proto-industrialisation was the phase of large-scale industrial production for an international market before factories. It was controlled by merchants and carried out by peasants and artisans in their homes in the countryside, using family labour and supplementing farm income.

Q2. Why did merchants from towns in Europe move to the countryside in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?

In towns, powerful urban crafts and trade guilds controlled production, competition and prices and restricted new entrants. In the countryside, poor peasants and artisans who had lost common lands were willing to produce for merchants in return for advances.

Q3. Why did some industrialists in nineteenth-century Europe prefer hand labour over machines?

Labour was plentiful and wages were low; machines were costly and broke down often; many industries were seasonal; and many goods needed intricate designs and human skill. The upper classes also preferred handmade goods.

Q4. Why were women workers in Britain hostile to the Spinning Jenny?

The Spinning Jenny allowed one worker to spin several threads at once, reducing demand for labour. Women who survived on hand spinning feared losing their jobs, so they attacked the new machines.

Q5. How did the East India Company procure regular supplies of cotton and silk from Indian weavers?

Q6. Why did the port of Surat decline by the end of the eighteenth century?

European companies gained concessions and monopoly rights to trade. Exports from Surat fell, the credit that financed trade dried up and local bankers went bankrupt. The value of trade fell from Rs 16 million to Rs 3 million by the 1740s, while Bombay grew.

Q7. Who was a jobber? Explain his role.

A jobber was an old and trusted worker employed by industrialists to recruit new workers. He brought people from his village, found them jobs, helped them settle and lent money in crises, but later demanded money and gifts and controlled workers' lives.

Q8. How did the First World War help Indian industries grow?

British mills turned to war production, so Manchester imports into India fell and Indian mills got a large home market. Indian factories supplied jute bags, uniforms, tents, boots and saddles to the army, new factories came up and production boomed.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain what happened to Indian cotton weavers in the nineteenth century.

The East India Company's monopoly, gomasthas and system of advances took away the weavers' bargaining power and paid them very low prices.

British industrialists imposed import duties on Indian textiles in Britain, so the export market collapsed: piece-goods fell from 33% of exports in 1811–12 to 3% by 1850–51.

Cheap machine-made Manchester goods flooded the Indian market, rising to over 50% of imports by the 1870s.

In the 1860s the American Civil War raised the price of raw cotton as it was exported to Britain, so weavers could not afford raw material.

By the end of the century, Indian factories also produced machine goods, adding to competition. Many weavers became agricultural labourers or migrated.

Q2. Why did hand labour remain important in Victorian Britain?

There was plenty of labour, so wages were low and industrialists saw no need for expensive machines.

Machines were costly, broke down often and were not as effective as claimed; at the start of the nineteenth century there were only 321 steam engines in England.

Seasonal industries such as gas works, breweries, printing and ship repair preferred to hire workers for the season.

Many goods needed variety and skill, such as 500 kinds of hammers and 45 kinds of axes.

The upper classes preferred handmade goods as symbols of refinement and class.

Q3. How did handloom production in India survive and even expand in the twentieth century?

Weavers adopted new technology such as the fly shuttle, which increased productivity; by 1941 over 35% of looms had fly shuttles.

Mills could not imitate specialised weaves such as saris with woven borders and Madras lungis and handkerchiefs.

Cheap mill yarn helped weavers, even though it destroyed hand spinning.

As a result, handloom cloth production almost trebled between 1900 and 1940, though weavers still lived hard lives.

MCQs with Answers

1. Proto-industrialisation refers to(a) Factory production in towns (b) Large-scale production for an international market before factories (c) Production only for local markets (d) Production using steam enginesAnswer: (b) Large-scale production for an international market before factories

2. Who created the cotton mill?(a) James Watt (b) James Hargreaves (c) Richard Arkwright (d) Henry FordAnswer: (c) Richard Arkwright

3. The Spinning Jenny was devised in 1764 by(a) Richard Arkwright (b) James Hargreaves (c) Mathew Boulton (d) NewcomenAnswer: (b) James Hargreaves

4. How many steam engines were there in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century?(a) 121 (b) 321 (c) 1,021 (d) 3,210Answer: (b) 321

5. A gomastha was a(a) Weaver (b) Jobber (c) Paid servant of the East India Company (d) Merchant clothierAnswer: (c) Paid servant of the East India Company

6. In 1811–12, piece-goods made up what share of India’s exports?(a) 3 per cent (b) 15 per cent (c) 33 per cent (d) 50 per centAnswer: (c) 33 per cent

7. The first cotton mill in Bombay came up in(a) 1854 (b) 1862 (c) 1874 (d) 1917Answer: (a) 1854

8. Who set up the first iron and steel works in India at Jamshedpur in 1912?(a) Dwarkanath Tagore (b) Dinshaw Petit (c) J.N. Tata (d) G.D. BirlaAnswer: (c) J.N. Tata

9. Over 50 per cent of Bombay cotton mill workers in 1911 came from(a) Kanpur (b) Ratnagiri (c) Ahmedabad (d) CalcuttaAnswer: (b) Ratnagiri

10. The fly shuttle helped weavers by(a) Making yarn finer (b) Increasing productivity per worker (c) Dyeing cloth faster (d) Replacing cotton with juteAnswer: (b) Increasing productivity per worker

Quick Revision Points

- Proto-industrialisation: merchant-controlled rural production before factories.
- Guilds in towns pushed merchants to the countryside.
- Wool chain: stapler, spinner, weaver, fuller, dyer, finishing in London.
- First factories by 1730s; raw cotton imports 2.5 million lb (1760) to 22 million lb (1787).
- Arkwright’s cotton mill brought all processes under one roof.
- Cotton led till 1840s; then iron and steel (£77 million exports by 1873).
- Less than 20% of workers in advanced sectors by late nineteenth century.

- Only 321 steam engines in England by early 1800s; Watt’s patent 1781.
- Plenty of cheap labour, seasonal work and demand for handmade goods kept hand labour alive.
- Spinning Jenny (1764) attacked by women spinners.
- Surat trade fell from Rs 16 million to Rs 3 million; Bombay and Calcutta rose.
- Gomasthas and advances tied weavers to the Company.
- Piece-goods exports fell from 33% to 3%; Manchester imports over 50% by 1870s.
- First Bombay cotton mill 1854; first Bengal jute mill 1855.
- Entrepreneurs: Dwarkanath Tagore, Dinshaw Petit, J.N. Tata, Seth Hukumchand.
- Jobbers recruited workers; workers came from nearby districts.
- First World War boosted Indian industry.
- Handloom production almost trebled 1900–1940; fly shuttles spread.
- Labels and calendars used gods, kings and swadeshi to sell goods.

Chapter Summary

The Age of Industrialisation shows that industrialisation was not simply a story of rapid factory growth. In Britain, it began with proto-industrial production in the countryside, then factories and cotton mills. But change was slow: steam engines spread gradually, cheap and abundant labour made hand work common, and workers faced seasonal unemployment and poverty.

In India, colonial rule broke the old textile trade networks. The East India Company controlled weavers through gomasthas and advances, and Manchester imports destroyed export and home markets. From the 1850s Indian entrepreneurs, often with China trade capital, set up mills, while European Managing Agencies dominated. The First World War and swadeshi helped Indian industry grow, yet small-scale and handloom production remained important, helped by the fly shuttle. Advertisements using gods, kings and nationalist messages created new markets.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- As per the CBSE 2026-27 curriculum, this chapter is assessed in periodic tests / internal assessment rather than the board theory paper. Confirm with your school before your exams.
- For periodic tests, focus on proto-industrialisation, why hand labour was preferred in Britain, what happened to Indian weavers and the role of the First World War.
- Learn the data table: Surat trade, piece-goods export share and Manchester import share are favourite one-mark facts.
- Practise source-based questions using the extracts on Will Thorne, the Spinning Jenny attack and the jobber.
- Write long answers point-wise with dates and figures.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main idea of The Age of Industrialisation?

It shows that industrialisation was a slow and uneven process in which hand labour and small-scale production stayed important, and explains how colonial rule shaped industry in India.

As per the CBSE 2026-27 curriculum, it is assessed through periodic tests rather than the board theory paper. Please confirm with your school.

What is proto-industrialisation?

The early phase of industrial production for an international market, organised by merchants and carried out in rural homes before factories.

Why did Indian weavers decline in the nineteenth century?

Because of Company control through gomasthas, loss of export markets, cheap Manchester imports and the high price of raw cotton after the American Civil War.

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Conclusion

The Age of Industrialisation shows that industries meant major technological change, factories and a new labour force, but hand technology and small-scale production remained central. Revise the data table, the Britain vs India comparison and the timeline, and you will be ready for any question on this chapter.

More Notes: Class 10 History Chapter 3: The Making of a Global World notes | Class 10 History Chapter 5: Print Culture and the Modern World notes | Class 10 History Chapter 3: The Making of a Global World notes | Class 10 History Chapter 2: Nationalism in India notes | All Class 10 Social Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE social science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

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