

## **Economic De-Industrilization of Assam, During the Colonial Period**

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### **Introduction:**

De-industrialization is the process by which manufacturing declines in a society or region as a proportion of total economic activity. It is the opposite of industrialization and therefore sometimes represents or step backward in the growth of a society's economy. The process of de-industrialization can be due to development and growth in economy and it can also occur due to political factors.

India which was once a industrialized nation on its way to de-industrialization during the colonial on rule. Assam was no exception to this general process. The industrial development in Assam resembled with the neighboring district of Bengal. The primary motive of the political domination of India by the British utilized their political power for exploiting the economic recourses and wealth of India for the benefit of the British setup their political power. First in Bengal and within a few decades of its resources to that is people were not left even with the minimum for existence the British applied the some policy in Assam. The trade in interest of the British applied result in the destruction of the collage industries. At the same time, the acceptance of the policy of free trade by the government of India in 1833 aggravated further the explanation of India by Britain, which had started producing machine made goods particularly the cotton textiles. Ultimately India become vast filed for the production of raw materials to feed the British industries and wide market o absorb the British manufacturers.

Several India historian argued had British rule led to de-industrialization India. But in case of Assam there was de-industrialization or not we can't say because there is no data or sources relating to it. The views of the historian were controversy. According to Priyan Goswami there was de-industrialization in Assam, but Rajen Saikia hold a positive view. So, we can take a rough idea about the topic of de-industrialization. The industry of Assam cannot be termed as industry because it was mainly local based. There were handicrafts at that time but there could not be term filled industries in real sense.

### **Objectives :**

1. To analysis the influence of British colonial in Assam's economy.
2. To signify how de-industrialization affected Assam's economic in the colonial period.
3. To understand the importance of industries in developing a country with reference of de-industrialization.

### **Research Methodology :**

This study is based on secondary data collected from different books, journals, source of internet etc.

### **De-Industrialization in colonial Assam :**

In Assam, most of the people were agriculturist. So, they are not professional workers in any of handicraft. In Bengal for example weaving industry received rude setback. The company uses political power to discourage the silk industry. Bengal for the silk fabrics of Bengal competed with silk fabrics manufactured England in the English market. The professional Tanties were compelled to work in company's factories. To save themselves from such oppression and compulsion many silk winders of Bengal cut off their thumbs. It was no longer profitable for the weaver to weave to weaver muel when they could not keep the gains of his labour. But such a class of professional tanties did not exist in Assam. Cloth making was an accomplishment in every house. The weaving in Assam was done by hand only. Assam for weaving cotton fabrics, the rough cotton was used. Finding no market for their goods, the local people gradually gave up the occupation. Only in these places where communication was difficult did the local industry survive. As the profession was profitable so they preferred to take to agriculture. The Gunakatiyas excelled in embroidery work on garments using old threads. But, the import of gold and silver wires from Europe completely extinguished that industry as well. Again the unequal nature of the competition between British fabrics and locally made cloth led to the ultimate ruin of the once flourishing industry. Thus cotton spinning had become a lost art in both the valleys and whatever thread used was almost all imported.

The demand for Assam silk began to increase towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, The external demand in case the price of silk goods, leaving the local population no other alternative but to take imported cotton that was cheaper and easily obtainable. Of course, the people imported cheaper cotton but the industry was not declining because a unique feature in Assamese society was the absence of specific class for weaving. Spinning and weaving was commonly practiced, irrespective of caste and creed knowledge of weaving was considered essential for every Assamese girl. About eighty percent produced were consumed and the rest exported. Assamese people have not to depend on others for silk. Whatever produced were consumed in Assam and the rest exported. During the period we never find Assam importing Muga silk when it had trade relations with the neighboring state. We find export of Assam Muga silk to Bengal. As soon as the Assamese become aware there was every possibility of cheaper fabrics making, its entry in Assam, they tried to improve its quality. The women folk embroidered the cloths with colored silk on the pattern of Kashmiri shawls. The price was also lowered. Regarding silk industry the view of Rajen Saikia is more authentic.

In Assam dye industry was not a cottage industry in the ordinary sense of the term. It was essentially a part of the rural economy. Catering to the needs of individual families, or at best a group of families in a locality and was produced only for domestic use. As a product of ordinary domestic skill, the people could not think of its commercial value. The production was need

based and within the domestic scale. But, with the establishment at the British rule the dye industry suffered. The inroads made by the Manchester goods led to the decline of the dyeing industry in Assam. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of people engaged in the manufacture of dyes and in the profession of dying was few and far between. It soon became a thing of the past and in place of the use of almost three hundred known varieties of plants, the use of only three or four varieties have survived to the present day. The dye's boom had thus worn off.

The handicrafts of Assam declined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to number of factors. One of such factor is the disappearance of the Ahom aristocracy. It struck the first blow at Ahom handicrafts. Due to the decline of old aristocracy in Assam the demand for fine articles for display and in other generational occasion disappeared and it also deprived the artisans of their rarest class patrons. For example Maslin, cotton and silk industry of Bengal flourished mainly under the patronage of Mughal Emperors and their countries. With the decline of the Mughal empire the demand for Bengal manufactures declined. In the Assam way in Assam ivory industry flourished under the patronage of the Ahom ruler. Under the Ahom government ivory carvers were required to supply in return for grants of land and labour. With the end of the Ahom rule the carvers took to plough which assured them a comfortable living. So, the supply of ivory was on the decline. Decline of ivory was the cause of disappearance of the art. The introduction of elephant preservation Act and its extension to the hill district added the scarcity of ivory. More than shortage of ivory, the prospect of a better external market of ivory was at the root of the collapse of the craft.

Again, iron making was on its decline during the colonial period. The smelting process of the blacksmith was primitive and labour intensive. As the output could not meet the consumption demanded, so iron products were imported from the hills. With the import of pig iron and steel bars from Calcutta, which began in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Smelting including digging out clay iron gradually disappeared. Iron bars were imported from Bengal and were generally used for manufacture of locally made instruments.

Wood carving one of the well known craft in Assam. But the number of people engaged in this craft was considerably low as the use of wooden articles was limited and so it had no chance of becoming an industry. There was no scope of any expert trade of these articles. Though, wooden artifact of all sizes found their admirers, there was no regular or consistent demand for these articles in the market to ensure financial security of the craftsman. The carpenters gradually drifted to other professions, mainly agriculture and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the craft was considered only a time occupation for most people. According to the census report there was no entry. In the absence of these classes Assam was not commercially integrated with the rest of India.

Though there was no decline of industries in colonial Assam but the handicraft industries suffered because soon after their annexation the British tried to create an atmosphere conducive

to the growth of the trade and commerce. The main motive of the Britosherers was to suppressed the handicraft industries and open Assam to British manufacture. There was also internal disorded the Burmese reign of terror had totally disrupted and dislocated the normal lift of people.

The decline of Ahom patronage also added to it because most of the industries grow under the royal patronage. Under the Ahom rule, there were only a few Khel's which were attached to some particular craft or artisanal industry. But with the establishment of British rule this Khel system was abolished lack of enough security of livelihood in the pursuit of the old crafts was the single common factor of decline of the artisanal industries of Assam.

### **Conclusion :**

From the above discussion we come to our conclusion that we can not say directly that there was de industrialization in Assam. Because as we have already discussed that in Assam there was no industry and what there were only handicraft industries. Most of the things were produced for domestic use and people could not think of its commercial value. But, then also we see its import and Assam. Soon with the establishment of British rule there was decline of indigenous industry. The decline of cottage industry had a disastrous effect on the economy of Assam. The British by destroying the indigenous industry produced a social revolution in the society. The self sufficient village economy was destroyed. Many craftsmen were jobless and had to turn to agriculture. The balance of trade totally shifted in forever of the East India company.

We cannot say in one word or sentence that there was de-industrialization of Assam.

### **Reference Book :**

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