

The Impact of Industrialization

Rushil Dussain, *Botswana/Mauritius*

From the late 1700s to the early 1900s, the world experienced a rapid wave of modernization, fueled by extensive social and economic change, known as the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization is the transformation of an agrarian society into an industrial one. Beginning in Britain, the Industrial Revolution later spread throughout Western Europe, before eventually transforming the whole world.

The Industrial Revolution benefited society immensely. Firstly, it improved the welfare of mankind, paving the way towards greater rights for workers, leading to substantial improvements in the quality of life of the working and middle class.

Furthermore, by virtue of the emergence of machinery during the Industrial Revolution, industrialization has enabled the mass production of goods, expediting the development of economies worldwide. Consider the steam engine, an invention emblematic of the Industrial Revolution. Before the steam engine, factories were powered by wind, water and human labour, which required factories to be built in specific locations with access to all of these resources. The steam engine allowed factories to be located anywhere, as it was powered by coal. The rise of new coal-based machinery also paved the way for the mechanization of agriculture.

Additionally, the Industrial Revolution saw remarkable advancements in sanitation and medicine, such as the invention of scalpels, microscopes, lenses, and test tubes, all of which could be produced much at a faster

rate due to industrialization. Moreover, newfound knowledge on cures and treatments could be dispersed quickly. Evidently, industrialization laid a crucial foundation for the modern pharmaceutical and medicinal system.

Britain, a pioneer of the Industrial Revolution, is a prime example of industrialization. In Britain, communication and transportation became convenient and cheap, due to the construction of canals in the early 1800s which made the transportation of goods by ship easier. The Industrial Revolution also lowered the costs of essential items, such as clothes and other household items, which enabled people to save money and amass wealth. Factories and mines provided many job opportunities, causing employment to soar.

Japan is another good example of the benefits of industrialization. The first railway line in Japan was built between Tokyo and Yokohama in 1872, carrying over a million passengers annually. Four years later, the railway system expanded to connect with other cities, such as Osaka and Kyoto, and soon after, the entire country was linked together by a complex network of rails. By 1911, there were nearly 9,000 kilometres of tracks constructed, as the railway system became the primary means of communication and transportation. The influence of industrialization on Japan's railway system is still impactful to this day and age, as the annual railway system ridership in Japan in 2017 was 15 billion.

Despite the evident benefits of industrialization on people's everyday lives and the economies of countries across the world, there were many significant downsides to industrialization.

Firstly, the promise of better wages attracted millions of people from the rural countryside to cities that were unprepared to handle them. People lived in poor conditions. Housing shortages in many areas resulted in sanitary problems. Local sewage and sanitation systems were overwhelmed by the sudden influx of people, which led to widespread health hazards, such as contaminated drinking water, and diseases such as typhus, cholera, smallpox and tuberculosis. It was said that "the factory system...meant much misery".

In addition, people worked in dangerous jobs under inhumane work schedules. Workers laboured for 14-16 hours a day, six days a week. Children and women were employed under hazardous conditions, for example in mines, where their small bodies were needed to crawl through tight spaces. There was also a major wage gap between female and male workers, and between adult and child workers: men's wages were almost double those of women, while wages earned by children working to supplement their families were even lower. Machinery was often dirty and expelled smoke in closed areas, which resulted in the deaths of thousands. In a coal mine, 2000 miners were killed in one explosion in 1878, a dozen being children.

The Industrial Revolution also had grave environmental implications. During the time of the early revolution, pollution caused by carbon monoxide levels were extremely low and had next to no impact. In the modern world, as the construction of factories multiplied exponentially, so did the use of coal, causing pollution levels to reach a dangerously high potency. Animals' natural habitats were destroyed to make way for factories and houses. Factories

emitted huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, carpeting the sky with a dense grey and polluting the habitats of plants and animals. Whilst there were many advantages to the Industrial Revolution, it can be argued that the downfalls were greater.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the Industrial Revolution has shaped our socio-economic system in the long run. When it came down to how willing one was to complete their job, as it was during the Industrial Revolution, growth and fracture of the middle class evolved. The emerging upper-middle-class of that era consisted of doctors, lawyers and factory owners who invested in capital and grew their assets. Lower class citizens, such as craftsmen, artists and bakers also lived better than they previously had as their skills are being appreciated in markets. With production immensely increased, Families who were previously rich and had invested in industries such as clothing or weaponry have consequently gotten even more wealthier after the revolution

In conclusion, the Industrial Revolution was an era that of significant societal change to mankind, a process of necessary evolution in production, labor and capital investment that continues to build a secure future for future generations. Through providing countless people with jobs and proper housing areas, it has boosted and stabilized economies for countries to prosper. It has brought upon enlightening innovations that reduced human effort, boosted productivity and provided mankind with welfare by decreasing the use of human labor in dangerous situations, gifting mankind with efficient and genius use of their resources, and discovering professional use of medicine. .

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