



Building Self Awareness: The Swadeshi Cult in Princely Mysore

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Abstract:

Indian national movement is replete with several epoch making events which provoked national consciousness among Indians during the Nationalist struggle. The actual implications of Swadeshi were dissimilar in different regions in India. Karnataka region also experienced the impact of Swadeshi. People started taking part in Swadeshi acts voluntarily .There was a rise in their number steadily. People undertook many constructive & productive activities willingly. Swadeshi movement directly benefited the local artisans and industries in India, and gave a boost to Indian Economy. In addition it infused a spirit of nationalism among Indians. Particularly the Khadi movement, which formed a part of Swadeshi movement made a major contribution in this direction. This movement gave Indians a means for giving vent to their nationalistic feeling, as well as a visible symbol of their determination to defy the British. This helped to build a large and strong community of Indians openly displaying their defiance and determination. This paper probes in detail about the spread of Swadeshi sentiment in this region & its impact on nationalist movement in Karnataka. This movement gave rise to a cadre of leaders who emerge as leaders of national movement.

Key words: Gandhian ideas, Leaders, Impact, National movement, Swadeshi awareness, "Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey" -Mahatma Gandhi on Swadeshi

Introduction

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Objectives

This paper probes in detail about the spread of Swadeshi sentiment in this region & its impact on nationalist movement in Karnataka. This movement gave rise to a cadre of leaders who emerge as leaders of national movement. Surfacing several administrative odds these leaders could poise the cause of the National movement with dexterity & composure.

Analysis

Swadeshi Movement –Meaning

The word *Swadeshi* derives from Sanskrit language, *Swa* means "self" or "own" and *desh* means country, so *Swadesh* would be "own country", and *Swadeshi*, the adjectival form, would mean "of one's own country". It was a movement designed by Mahatma Gandhi as an economic strategy to improve the economic conditions of the countless artisans of India who were on the brink of continual joblessness & redundancy. Conditions of artisans in India had become extremely precarious because of combined outcome of competition from manufactured goods imported from Britain and unfair & anti Indian policies

imposed by the British. All these administrative policies were designed to benefit the British business houses at the cost of Indian artisans. There was growing restlessness among the artisan class as they had lost their traditional livelihood means. Mahatma Gandhi visualizing this socio economic impact of restiveness evolved a new strategy to ameliorate the masses from a mood of confrontation to that of patriotism¹.

Swadeshi as the Core Strategy

Swadeshi refers to the core strategy of the movement of using only the goods manufactured in India, and boycotting or refusing to use imported goods. It provided the poor artisans a means to earn a livelihood². At the same time it helped the entire financial system of the country. These benefits were obtained in spite of the lower market price of manufactured goods imported from Britain. In addition to helping the Indian economy, this strategy reduced the benefits British could extract by exploiting India. In this way it reduced the determination of Britain to hold on to their rule over India³.

This National awareness of Bengali people who started the agitation against the mighty British was taken up by the other regions throughout India⁴. It was very rapidly seen that there was rigorous debate among the people in public circles⁵. It did not end only in meetings, protest marches, petitions and deputations, as the Bengali people became the torch bearers of nationalism and the idea spread to whole of India quickly⁶. The anti partition movement



or the Swadeshi movement lead to the following implications in Karnataka. In this region the Swadeshi movement picked up lately but the visits of stalwart Leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak⁷ incited Swadeshi sentiment⁸.

1. The Use of Swadeshi Goods
2. The Promotion of Indigenous Industries
3. The Boycott of Foreign Goods
4. The Promotion of National education
5. The Demand for Swaraj or Self- Rule

The last demand was more of a National character as seen in Nationalist news papers of that time⁹. The people in Mysore could create an awareness among the people to use and wear Khadi or hand woven garments and promote the home industries the youth came out strongly against the usage of foreign goods such as watches, shirts, papers, coats and consumer durables¹⁰.

The Influence of Lokamanya Tilak:

This program was placed before the Indian national congress of 1906 it was presided over by Dada Bhai Naroji other nationalist leaders who had become popular in Mysore through their speeches and writings were the following¹¹.

1. Lokamanya Tilak
2. Aurobindo Ghosh
3. Lala Lajpat Rai
4. Bipin Chandra Pal
5. Surendranatha Banerjee
6. Gopal Krishna Gokhale

7. Dadabhai Naoroji

Karnataka gave full support to Tilak and his new agitation techniques¹². The people of Kannada land believed that the agitations of this kind was essential to fight the mighty British empire¹³. The sharp writings of Tilak made the people to think¹⁴. The translations of Tilak's writings could be seen in the News papers of the stature like Vritantha Bodhini and others¹⁵. The agitateness found in the writings of Tilak soon found fans and most of the people in Karnataka staged processions when he was imprisoned. This also gave vent to the aspirations of the people to join a movement which was unique¹⁶. The Swadeshi Movement had its genesis in the anti-partition movement which was started to oppose the British decision to partition Bengal¹⁷. But in Mysore state also there were involvement of the people¹⁸.

1. Public meetings and processions:

These emerged as the major methods of mass mobilization and simultaneously as forms of popular Nationalist expression. Even though Bangalore & Mysore were the centers of such activities, there were processions & public meeting in Shimoga, Hassan, Chitradurga, Mandya as well¹⁹.

2. Emphasis given to self-reliance or 'atma shakti'

Swadeshi implied a form of expressing the self. This implied re-assertion of national dignity, honor and confidence and



- social and economic regeneration of the villages. In practical terms, it included social reform and campaigns against caste oppression, early marriage, dowry system, consumption of alcohol, etc. There were several social & community associated programs reaching out to Villagers²⁰. Social reform was seen as a part of the constructive activity envisaged by the Swadeshi²¹.
3. It proved to be a “leap forward” in more ways than one. Hitherto untouched sections students, women²², some sections of urban and rural population—participated.
 4. These samitis generated political consciousness among the masses through magic lantern lectures, Swadeshi songs, physical and moral training to their members, social work during famines and epidemics, organization of schools, training in Swadeshi crafts and arbitration courts. The idea was to use such occasions as a means of reaching out to the masses and spreading political messages. For instance, Tilak’s Ganapatii and Shivaji festivals became a medium of Swadeshi propaganda not only in western India, but also in Bengal, later it spread across India.
 5. This movement gave Indians a means for giving vent to their nationalistic feeling, as well as a visible symbol of their determination to defy the British. This helped to build a large and strong community of Indians openly displaying their defiance and determination²³.
 6. All major trends of the national movement, from conservative moderation to political extremism, from revolutionary terrorism to incipient socialism, from petitions and prayers to passive resistance and non-cooperation, emerged during the Swadeshi Movement²⁴.
 7. The richness of the movement was not confined to the political sphere alone, but encompassed art, literature, science and industry also²⁵.

Conclusion

Thus Swadeshi movement directly benefited the local artisans and industries in India, and gave a boost to Indian Economy even though the layers of impact were dissimilar across states of India. In addition it infused a spirit of nationalism among Indians. Particularly the Khadi movement, which formed a part of Swadeshi movement made a major contribution in this direction. Khadi refers to coarse hand woven cloth made from hand spun yarn, and this movement involved wearing only such cloth. In terms of its social constructiveness and its cultural productivity it sought both to assert indigenous autonomy from the British Empire and to establish knowledgeable affiliations beyond empire, on the world stage. These emerged as major methods of mass mobilization and simultaneously as forms of popular expression. Swadeshi was thus a program for long-term survival for Indians the implications of



which are visible even today in multifarious colors.

References

¹ I refuse to buy from anybody anything, however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom Nature has made my first care. the Book "Mind of Mahatma Gandhi" chap. 87

² Gandhi did not just conceptualize the instruments of change he also showed their efficacy by use. He began the manufacture of Swadeshi cloth on a small experimental basis at the Sabarmati Ashram in 1917. He found five families who had been weavers till a few years ago and were willing to resume their occupation if they were given some help. The ashram supplied them with yarn and its volunteers took delivery of the cloth woven and paid them cash at the market rate.

³ A very significant instrument of social change, in Gandhi's view, was the precept and practice of Swadeshi, which implied self-reliance and self-sufficiency at the level of the individual, the village and the nation.

⁴ Gonsalves, Peter. Clothing for Liberation, A Communication Analysis of Gandhi's Swadeshi Revolution, SAGE, (2010)

⁵ Manor, James (1975), "Princely Mysore before the Storm: The State-Level Political System of India's Model State, 1920-1936", Modern Asian Studies 9 (1): 31-58, [JSTOR 311796](#) pp 1-22

⁶ Gonsalves, Peter. Clothing for Liberation, A Communication Analysis of Gandhi's Swadeshi Revolution, SAGE, (2010)

⁷ The militant nationalists led by Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh wanted the movement to be taken outside Bengal to other parts of the country and go beyond a boycott of foreign goods to become a full-fledged political mass struggle with the goal of attaining Swaraj.

⁸ Government of Mysore publication. Freedom Struggle in Karnataka, who is who Vol.I,p, 25-35

⁹ D. V. Tahmankar (1956). Lokamany Tilak: Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India. John Murray; 1st Edition (1956).PP 1-12

¹⁰ Government of Mysore publication. Freedom Struggle in Karnataka, who is who Vol.I,p, 25-35

¹¹ Siddavahahalli Krishnasharma, Gandhi Mattu Karnataka, PP, 480-490.



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- ²⁴ Suryanath Kamat (ed), Swatantrya Sangramada Smritigalu, Vol. III, p, 217.
- ²⁵ The Government Porcelain Factory, Government Porcelain factory Mysore, the Government Soap Factory, BangaloreA cloth factory was begun at Bellary. "Bharat Mill" was started in Hubli. The cloth factories were opened at Gadag, Phulgaon and other places