



Boycotting Foreign Goods in Colonial India: Swadeshi Artistry and Bengali

Nationalism

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ABSTRACT

What did “Swadeshi Industry” mean in subjugated India? The generally held view is that industries that are Indigenously owned are Swadeshi industries. But it cannot be considered as Swadeshi Industry only if it is Indigenously owned. Revival of Swadeshi Handicrafts . A Review of the history of modern industrialization efforts have sometimes intensified sometimes slowed down due to adverse conditions, but never extinguished. Throughout the colonial era, this genre of Swadeshi art has declared its existence in one way or another. The attempt to grow as an independent industry struggling against foreign economic encroachment in colonial india is the basic prerequisite for what is known as “ Swadeshi Industry". In fact, in the industrial sector of Undivided Bengal in the 20th Century, this nationalism manifested itself in various ways, sometimes through open calls for boycott foreign goods, sometimes indirectly by promoting the need to use only Swadeshi products without direct British opposition. It is noteworthy that foreign, especially British, opposition came directly when political movements were gaining momentum, such as the Anti-Bengal partition movements of 1905 and its immediate aftermath ,in the early 1920s or early 1930s. As industrialization in the national economy progressed at its own pace, so did the political movement

Quicken that pace, breathe new life into it, and thus they acted as complements to each other.

Introduction :- By “ Swadeshi Era” in colonial india we generally understand the early decades of the 20th century i.e the period of political agitation against the partition of Bengal. But in a broad sense, this era began earlier, in the second half of the nineteenth century- in the 1870s or earlier. This period, especially the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, was one of the most creative periods in the history of modern india. Different types of Swadeshi thought, poverty of the country, crisis of the domestic Economy, Colonial exploration, initial efforts to establish Swadeshi Industry, Boycott of foreign goods, Swadeshi propaganda through various Media- all these started in the second half of the nineteenth century. During the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century or 1947, the concept of Swadeshi came to the fore through various activities. What is “Swadeshi Industry” mean in subjugated India? The generally held view is that industries that are Indigenously owned are Swadeshi industries. But it cannot be considered as Swadeshi Industry only if it is Indigenously owned. The Question that is particularly important here is that we are discussing a country which was a subjugated country directly ruled by British Imperialism. According to Amit Bhattacharya, Swadeshi industries in subjugated India should not be brought under Swadeshi ownership, but at the same time, capital, management, technical know- how, markets and even machinery should be relied upon as much as possible. Self- reliance also needs to be characterized by opposition to British Imperialist capital and a spirit of standing on one's own feet competition with it. The attempt to grasp an independent industry struggling against foreign economic encroachment in colonial India is the basic prerequisite for what is known as “ Swadeshi Industry”. Amit Bhattacharya writes, this Swadeshi Bourgeoisie belongs to the national Bourgeoisie. In relation to this class with foreign capital and the ruling class, dependency and antagonism existed, but the main aspect was British opposition. It was this anti- Imperialist side that put him in a unique position.

Objectives :- The present article has been undertaken with following objectives :-

- i) This article discusses the basic preconditions of what was known as “ swadeshi Industry” in colonial India's attempt to grow as an Independent Industry struggling against foreign economic encroachment.

- ii) Discusses the economic activities that started in the spirit of standing on one's own feet in opposition to and competition with British Imperialist Capital.

Methodology :- The present articles is descriptive in nature and is based on the secondary sources of information.

Discussion:- Modern Industrialization was one of the most important aspects of economic activity in the Swadeshi era. Swadeshi initiatives can be seen reflected in various branches of industry. Discussing the context of Swadeshi economic activities in Bengal, Sumit Sarkar mentions five distinct trends i). Promotion of technical education and industrial research .

ii). Promotion of Swadeshi products through exhibitions, Swadeshi shops and volunteers selling Swadeshi products at low price.

iii). Revival of moribund Swadeshi handicrafts.

iv). Establishment of new modern industries, v). Establishment of Swadeshi banks, insurance companies and shipping companies.

Establishment of Technical Education Institutions and Promotion of Technical Education:-

Technical education in Bangladesh started in 1885. At that time, geologist Pramatha Nath Bose mentioned the need for a science curriculum in the university curriculum, a separate science and technology institute and the “*Indian Industrial Development Association*”. According to him, the primary prerequisite for establishing a “science Industry” is the expansion of Technical Education. As a result of his initiative and advocacy, the “*Indian Industrial society*” was formed in 1891. In the early stages, this association arranged lecture suitable for the general public on the Coal industry and fiber. Relatively more important and effective than the “*Indian Industrial Development Association*” was the “*Indian science and Industrial Education promotion Association*” created by lawyer Yogendra Ghosh. It was established in 1904. The purpose of this association was to raise funds by levying subscriptions to send Indian youths abroad for Technical Education. The membership fee of this association was 4 Anna’s. The activities of the association expanded and within a year 48 district committees were formed.

Many articles on Swadeshi art- Education were published in contemporary periodicals. One of them is *Dawn Society Magazine*. From the late 1890s, articles against the mechanization of western style art began to appear. According to Satish Chandra Mukherjee India needs to develop a kind of dual

economy. Railways, Mines, Chemical industries, etc, where there is no movement without capitalist organization, capitalist Industrial organizations in all those fields, and the development of small industries in all other fields. Along with that, he wrote in the magazine, referring to the plight of the Industrial workers described in Engel's. "The condition of the working class in England" that industrialization gave rise to social conflict between the workers and the owners.

But the most important effort in this regard was the " National Education Council" of Jadavpur which evolved into Jadavpur University. Bengal Technical Institute was established in 1910 under the initiative of this Council. This organization in various departments of science and technology branch. Introduced three years of primary education and four years of secondary education. Mechanics, Electricity, Drawing, physics, Chemistry, mathematics, economic, Geology etc. are taught in various subjects. Amitabh Mukhopadhyaya has discussed this in detail in his book on National Education. Various reports of the National Council of Education reveal that students trained in " Banga Technical Institutes" make various types of instruments, such as electrometers using electrolytic action, light ammeters, etc. This organization lasted from 1910-29. In 1929 it was named " Jadavpur Engineering and Technical College". In 1956 this college was converted into Jadavpur university. B.T.I in the expansion of national science and technology education in colonial India. Or the role of engineering colleges s undeniable.

Sale Of Swadeshi Goods Through Exhibitions and Shops etc:-

We are more and less familiar with Nabagopal Mitra's promotion of Swadeshi products through " Hindu Mela" in Bengal in the mid- nineteenth century. From 1893, the same activity re- emerged at the initiative of *Shilpa Samiti*. Every year during the season of the Indian National Congress or at the district level various types of Swadeshi Fairs and exhibitions were organized through which various Swadeshi products were sold. Burdwan kanchannagar knife, scissors, Calcutta city P.M. Bagchi company performs- nothing was left out. Gold medals and certificates of recognition were awarded through quality judging. During the anti- partition movements of 1905, Swadeshi Industry and trade naturally expanded, while calls for boycotts if foreign goods boosted the domestic market. At that time it is Necessary to sell these Swadeshi products through various shops. As a result, many Swadeshi shops were born. Many of which sold only Swadeshi goods. It was clearly mentioned in various advertisements given by them. Names of shops like " Swadeshi Bazar", "Swadeshi Bastralaya", "Swadeshi Bhandar", "Bharat Bhandar", " Chhatra Bhandar" etc. are particularly noteworthy. Besides, the volunteers used to stand at the road Junctions go round the houses or go round the train rooms and

ferry the Swadeshi goods. Older people still remember the sale of P.M Bagchi's ink, H.Bose and co,s “kuntlin”, Delkhosh, Dhol company's ointment and many other items.

Revival of Dying Swadeshi Handicrafts:-

The British colonial rule caused a total disaster in the industrial life of Bangadesh. Various sectors of Handicrafts, including textiles, face deindustrialization. E.W, Collin in his report of 1890 mentioned that except wood, Brass, mats, and earthenware, all other Handicrafts of Bengal suffered greatly due to the entry of European goods into the market. As the market was flooded with foreign Manchester cloth, weavers in many areas were forced to stop production. Census reports show that in the decade 1891-1901 the number of weavers in Bangadesh was 5% decreases.

This decline in cotton production was partly by the Swadeshi Movement. In fact, at that time, the demand for local products developed in different regions of Bangadesh. Official reports indicate that the condition of weavers in the presidency and Burdwan division has improved significantly. G.N. Gupta(Gyanendranath Gupta)in his report. Noted that deindustrialization forced a large number of weavers to abandon their craft, many of whom returned to their old livelihoods by 1908. Gupta wrote in his report that in 1906- 07 the import of European goods declined particularly in Dhaka and Chittagong divisions of East Bengal and in 1902-07 the demand for native cotton increased considerably in Rajshahi division. According to the 1906-07 report of the Rajshahi division, the demand for country goods in Pabna district increased to such an extent that it was not possible for the weavers to meet the market demand. In Niakhali district during 1905- 08vthe import of foreign cloth decreased considerably and the demand for native cloth increased.

There is no doubt that the Swadeshi Movement played an important role in the revival of Swadeshi handicrafts. But what was needed was the improvement of the conventional loom. The “ throw- shuttle handloom. Which has been in vogue in our country for many generations has not been attempted to improve it. Srirampur government textile training centre director E.B Havel introduced the “ fly- shuttle loom" to replace the old spider. This loom was invented by the English weaver John Key in the middle of the 18th century. This technical invention played a major role behind the industrial revolution in England. This new Maku was hand operated like the old Maku, but it was of better quality. As a result, the weavers of different regions of Bangadesh started using *Maku* for production. Textile schools were established in different regions of Bangadesh by the initiative of nationalist workers. In those schools the

educated “ *Gentleman*” were taught weaving. Apart from Kolkata, such schools were established in Mymensingh, Tangail, Barisal regions.

The Swadeshi period also saw a revival in other areas of handicrafts besides textiles. Two notable centres of silk Industry were Malda and Murshidabad. According to Cummings, silk artists were better off than artists. Kanchannagar in Burdwan gained special fame as a centre for the manufacture of knives, scissors, etc. Recently researcher Achintya kumar Dutta has recorded a detailed account of this. The art history of kanchannagar is about five hundred years old. The names of artists Premchand Mistry and Guruchand Mistry are still remembered there with reverence. Banchannagar products were available in many local shops and were also exported abroad Kanchannagar was called the Sheffield of Bengal for the superior quality of these knives and scissors. Besides, Bronze- Brass products spread in North Medinipur. Swadeshi pen, Nib is one of the Industrial innovations of that era. “ Barishal Nib Manufacturing Co”, Bar” Swadeshi Shilpa Niketan”, Kolkata are particularly notable in this regard. Apart from this, the initiative in Hoogly, Howrah, Dhaka and Murshidabad, hand – made paper, branch industry of Dhaka etc. is also noteworthy.

New Modern Industrialization:-

Modern industrialization was one of the most important aspects of economic activity in the Swadeshi era. Swadeshi initiatives can be seen reflected in various Branches of industry. For example, textile industry, Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry, Iron industry, Deslai Industry, Tobacco and Cigarette, Biri industry, Soap Industry, Leather industry, Paper industry, Steam Shipping Industry, Banks, Insurance and many other industries. With each industry there are different company initiatives to be seen. For example, Bengal Cotton Mill, Mohini Mill in textile industry, Bengal Chemical, Bengal Immunity, Calcutta Chemical, East India Pharmaceuticals in Chemical and pharmaceutical industry, CK Sen & Co, H. Bose & Co, in head oil or Bengal Chemical, K P. Bagchi in ink production. M. Bagchi, Sulekha works, Calcutta soap Co. In soap Industry, oriental soap Factory, Bhagirathi Match Factory in Deslai Industry, Jalpaiguri industries, National Tannery in Leather industry, Baharampur Leather works, RANGPUR Tobacco Co. in Tobacco and Cigarette industry, Bengal Cigarette Co., Sadhana Oodhalaya in Ayurvedic medicine Industry, Shakti Pharmaceuticals, Pioneer Iron works I’m Machinery and Iron Industry, Maya Engineering Works, India Machinery Co, Barasat, Bengal water proof works in Manufacturing hats, gunboats, East Bengal River Stream service Ltd. in steam and Navigation Industry, Bengal Stream Navigation Co. Bengal in Banking industry National Bank, Hindustan Cooperative

insurance society Limited and many other Companies. Apart from these were many other companies in these industries not to mention food.(For a detailed discussion on this see Amit Bhattacharya's book- Swadeshi Enterprise in Bengal 1900- 1920; Swadeshi Enterprise in Bengal- the second phase 1921-1947, The profile of a National Enterprise in Bengal, P.M Bagchi of Co, 2883- 1947).

Social and Class origins of Swadeshi Art:-

The activities of the industrialists in the Swadeshi era were mainly derived from three types of social classes- i). Middle class in which we will find engineers, Doctors, Chemists, Lawyers, School teachers and professors ii) Handicraftsmen, who set up small- medium scale factories in Burdwan, Barishal, Howrah, Kolkata and many other areas. A section of the Zaminders who established some Swadeshi Companies in various regions including Rangpur, Pabna, Nadia. These small and medium capitalists were largely self- reliant and instead of following the path of dependence on foreign capitalists like the big capitalists,they tried to develop National industries independently on their own inland achieved success in many fields. In our country, we mean this class by the nation Bourgeoisie. There are fundamental differences between this small and medium National Bourgeoisie and the large Mutsuddi Bourgeoisie in several respects. These areas of difference are –

- a) Social sources b). Primitive methods of accumulation c). Knowledge of production methods/research d). Selection of factory sites and plans for building factories e). Company managers/ experts f).Machinery and g). Markets h). Political perspectives.

a) Social sources:-

India's grand Bourgeoisie emerged from the classes of merchants ,Bankers, Brokers, Speculators and gamblers. The class structure of the Petty and middle Bourgeoisie was distinct. Prafulla Chandra Roy, the founder of the *Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical company (1892)*, was a Chemist and Professor of Chemistry. Yogesh Chandra Ghosh, the founder of Sadhana Oishadhalaya(1914), was also a professor of Chemistry. P.M. Kishore Mohan Bagchi, the founder of Bagchi & Co, came from a Middle- class background. This Swadeshi company is the first Chemical ink Manufacturer in India. Besides, Calendars, perfume oils, Scents, Rubber Stamps, types, kavirajis and Allopathic medicines and other products were prepared in the company's factories. Ramesh Chandra Sen, a Lawyer by profession, set up a factory in Mymensingh district for making Gingham trousers. Pabna district was the largest Hosiery Manufacturing centre in those days. The most notable company in this regard is *Pabna Shilpa Sanjeevani Company*. It's founder Tarangobind Choudhury was a Zamindar name Pabna. Karuna

Kisdhore Kargupta, owner of Betjan & Co, was also a Zamindar. Mahendranath Nandi, a physician from Comilla, established a machine making factory called pioneer Iron works. Here the guillotine Machine was made for the Deslai Industry. Dr. Nandi himself is the inventor of that machine. Mathura Mohan Chakraborty, the founder of Shakti Pharmacy, was a school principal in Dhaka by profession. Banamali Karmakar of Natagarh in the Twenty Four parganas district established a factory for making tools. The artisans of Kanchannagar, Najol, Howrah or Ultadanga set up various types of small and medium factories in their respective areas.

The social origin of the big Bourgeoisies shows what their primitive mode of accumulation was. Business brokerage, currency trading, Speculation, gambling, banking were their primitive ways of saving. On the other hand, the mode of capital accumulation of the Petty and Middle Bourgeoisie was completely different. Prafulla Chandra Roy earned money by teaching. He also collected money from friends and relatives by going door to door. With the money from these sources, he established Bengal Chemical. Dr. Nitration Sarkar prepared the National Tannery with the money he saved as a doctor. P.M. Kishore Mohan, the founder of Bagchi & Co, started manufacturing ink in 1883 with a capital of just 2 rupees. He is said to have raised this money by selling gold models earned after Jalpai and matric exams. The House of Laborers in Comilla was prepared by a few enterprising workers or people from the middle class. The initial capital of TK 210 was raised by borrowing from a local businessman in Comilla.

C). Basic knowledge about Production Methods :- knowledge of the Methods of production of the big Bourgeoisie was generally non-existent; on the other hand, many of the representatives of the Petty and Middle Bourgeoisie has considerable knowledge about it and many of them were directly involved in basic research. Prafulla Chandra Roy in his autobiography (Life and experiences of a Bengali Chemist) described the early history of Bengal Chemical. How he experimented with clay to make "fine Carbonate of Soda"; burnt animal bones with its ashes mixed Sulphuric Acid and made "phosphate of soda Crystals" in various other ways. All the machines of Bengal Chemical are manufactured in their factory. Srinath Mill, which manufactured dyed textiles, was owned by Udayakumar Das, who a Lawyer, engineer, manager and technical expert all in one. The big Bourgeoisie focused more on importing machinery or goods than on doing basic research them; on the other hand, medium-Sized Swadeshi Companies like P.M. Bagchi & Company had set up Laboratories to prepare allopathic Medicines based on basic research.

There is Dr. M.Vidhubhushan Bhattacharya(M.D). Jaopari, Kudal, Apang, Karjhu, Muktachari etc. Made various types of patent medicines by experimenting with native plants expertise in the manufacture of Machinery can also be traced back to the colonial period, particularly in the early 20th century.(Amit Bhattacharya: Swadeshi Enterprise in Bengal the second phase 1921- 1947.

d). Selection of factory site and plan for construction of factory:-

The big Bourgeoisie depended on foreign experts to decide where to set up factories, how they would be structured, or what they would look like. The history of Tata's making *Tisco* clearly shows that. The Petty and middle Bourgeoisie, however, depended on themselves. During the Swadeshi period, Mohini Mohan Chakraborty, the owner of Mohini Mills, a textile manufacturing company in Kushtia, designed all the plans for his factory. The Haran Ayurvedic Dispensary built by Haran Chandra Mukhopadhyaya was established in the Rural areas of Bankura, as it was easier to collect Medical plants from the Surrounding forest area. One of the reasons for the establishment of Rangpur Tobacco Co.in Rangpur district was the easy available of availability of Tobacco in that district. Prasanna Match Factory, Bhagirathi Match Factory or Jalpaiguri industries Limited when established. At that time, the owners of those factories looked at the availability of Timber, Cheap Labor, electricity supply and proximity of markets.

e). **Company Director/ Expert :-** This big Bourgeoisie depended largely on foreigners for Management, expert advice and the formation of management committees. As a result they had no difficulty in maintaining control over the Indian industry as the first General manager of Tisco in Jamshedpur was an American named wells. The situation was different for the Petty and middle Bourgeoisie. For example, B.N. Das was the manager of the Calcutta weaving Co. and was no stranger to the management committee of that company. Bengal Hosiery Co. was managed by M/S W.N Bose & Co. Bangalakhmi Cotton Mill, Mohini Mill, Bengal Pottery; “*Jabakusum*” Kesoil Manufacture C.K. Sen and many other Swadeshi Companies entrusted Management to Indians, of particular note in this regard is the name of the Oriental Soap Factory, who started in a 1909 advertisement that they had no foreign or “*Japanese*” Specialists.

f). **Equipment:-** one of the hallmarks of Industrialization in India increasing import of Machinery from abroad. This is not because Indian artisans lacked Skill or Swadeshi technology was not developed in the country. The main reason for this is that colonial state destroyed the Swadeshi Industry as well as Swadeshi technology and established foreign Industrial systems on Indian soil. The big Bourgeoisie

generally imported Machines from abroad and set up factories, using foreign technology;. They had no intention of making Machines themselves. This dependence on foreign technology can also be seen in part among the Petty and middle Bourgeoisie. Textiles, Cigarettes were manufactured using machinery imported from abroad. But there was another side to it that didn't dominate the researcher's study. Many of the Petty and middle Bourgeoisie themselves made machines in their own factories and produced with those machines. For example, Udayakumar Das, The head of Srinath Mills, was an engineer himself and prepared all the machines in his factory himself. All the machines of Bengal Chemical are also made in their factory. They used to take the machinery of Srinath Mill or Bengal Chemical for the use of their factories. This self- reliance did not push them towards foreign dependence. But their machinery was for use in their factories, not products for the market. On the other hand, many Swadeshi industries made machines for sale in the market. For example, an engineer named Dinabandhu Mukhopadhyaya developed and patented a new type of cloth weaving machine called "Dinabandhu Maku". Bhabani Engineering and Trading Co. Manufactures various types of Deslai Making Machines. By making changes between German and Japanese instruments systems keeping in mind the Indian woods and other regional characteristics, they were able to play Deslai Machines suitable here. Apamohan Das of Howrah founded the India Machinery Co. Which manufactured a wide variety of high quality machines.

g). Market :- Instead of the big Bourgeoisie relying on foreigners for markets, the Petty and middle Bourgeoisie depended on local Shops. During the Colonial Period, Many small and big shops were established I different parts of the country. Through which Swadeshi goods were sold. In this regard, the names of *Lakshmi Bhandar, Bharat Bhandar, Sur & Co, Chhatra Bhandar, Khadi Bhandar, Fecto* etc. are particularly noteworthy.

h). Political Views:- The political outlook of the Swadeshi Bourgeoisie was fundamentally different from that of the big Bourgeoisie. British capital had not only economic ties with the big Bourgeoisie, but also political ties with the colonial state. Sunitikumar Ghosh has discussed this in detail in his *India and the Raj: Glory Shame and Bondage* (vol- i& ii). Bipan Chandra, Aditya Mukherjee have a different opinion on this ,who consider the Indian Bourgeoisie as the national Bourgeoisie. According to them the Indian Bourgeoisie was in no way dependent on British Imperialism. Many of the representatives of the native Bourgeoisie were directly involved in the revolutionary Movement against British rule. Hirendranath Duttgupta , one of the leaders of East India Pharmaceuticals, was associated with the revolutionary organization "Yugantar" and was Imprisoned for anti colonial activities. Surendra Mohan

Bose, the founder Bengal Waterproof works, was Imprisoned during world war-1 for taking part in anti-British revolutionary political activities. The Gopal Hosiery Company of Jadavpur refused to supply Genjis and trousers to the British Army during world War- ii. All these were brilliant examples of political opposition to the British colonial state which could not have been expected from representatives if the big Bourgeoisie like TATA, Birla, Sriram or Goenka.(Amit Bhattacharya : Indian Bourgeoisie in Colonial India: A Comparative Study, The Quarterly Review of Review Historical Studies, April-September- 2001.

Conclusion :- Between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century or until 1947, the concept of Swadeshi ideas has repeatedly come to the fore through various activities, revival of native Handicrafts a Review of the history of establishment of new modern industries shows that efforts to establish national industries sometimes intensified, sometimes stagnated due to adverse conditions but never extinguished. Throughout the colonial era, this genre of Swadeshi artistry has declared its existence in one way or another. So it can be said that just as the anti- partition movement of 1905 and then the establishment of Industry in the national economy in the early 1920s or 1930s took off a its own pace,so too did the political movement invigorate at the pace and this they complemented each other worked as.

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