

Swadeshi Movement in India and its impact on freedom struggle – A study

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Abstract: The genesis of ‘Boycott Movement’ could be traced back to the freedom struggle of country ‘Ireland’. However, in India’s freedom struggle, the term boycott became very popular, which aims at promoting and reviving Indian industries by using only domestically manufactured goods and to shun the foreign made products. Locally, this ‘boycott movement’ was named as ‘Swadeshi Movement’, which became robust after Bengal Partition by the Britishers. To create awareness about this massive movement, freedom leaders gathered people for meeting on several occasions and persuaded to understand and adopt ‘boycott’, even made them vow solemnly against foreign goods. Following the footsteps and success stories of Bengal, meetings were organized even in other provinces too. People from different sections of the society like working classes, layers, zamindars, the peasants, the students, the young, shopkeepers, medical men, native army, priests, barbers and washermen etc., were persuaded to take part in ‘Swadeshi Movement’ and to shun using foreign goods. There was acceptance and acknowledgement for ‘Swadeshi Movement’ from every segment of the society. For instance, the washermen, decided to stop washing foreign made cloths and barbers rejected to serve the people who used foreign goods. Priests refused to perform ceremonies who used imported items. People boycotted the shops which sold foreign goods and even set the goods on fire, they also persuaded others to shun selling and buying of foreign goods. People chanted ‘Vande Mataram’ to bring in enthusiasm in the common masses. These actions of volunteers helped in averting people from using foreign articles. Students joined the movement, which resulted in punishments from their respective schools and colleges including their expulsion. The other mechanism employed by the protagonists of the ‘Swadeshi Movement’ was ‘Ostracism’ from the society for the people using foreign products. Such people were socially out casted, mocked on, insulted and abused publically. Their children were isolated by other kids in the neighborhood and schools and even the marriages of their children were affected especially in the areas of Bengal. As a result, the imports of British manufactured goods dropped drastically. Britishers tried all methods and means to repress the agitation. This

paper analyses the ‘Swadeshi Movement’ and its impact on the India’s freedom struggle.

Key words: Freedom Struggle, Division of Bengal, Swadeshi Movement, Shun Foreign goods.

INTRODUCTION

The last official act of Lord Curzon was the partition of Bengal. The province of Bengal was sought to be divided into two parts that is the Western and Eastern Bengal. In Western Bengal Hindus were in majority and in the eastern zone Muslims were in preponderance. It was said that partition was necessary for administrative convenience and efficiency because geographically the province had grown very largely. But Indians in general and the Bengalis in particular clearly realised that it was a subtle move on the part of the British government to weaken the forces of Nationalism in Bengal by weaning away the Muslims. Lord Curzon visited East Bengal and in his attempt to win over Muslims in favour of the partition, said that the partition would create in East Bengal a province, where the Muslims could flourish without the dominance of any other community. The partition was taken to be a diplomatic move to play the game of divide and rule. Some of the Muslims were apparently caught in the Snare. The speeches and intentions of Lord Curzon and other British officials might have been misunderstood, but the subsequent riots which occurred were attributed to those speeches by the Hindus. A vigorous agitation started against the contemplated partition. Swadeshi movement had already been gaining ground in Bengal and other provinces of India. People of Bengal retained by giving a vigorous start to the movement by boycotting the foreign and specially the British goods. The Swadeshi movement and the Boycott Movement spread throughout the length and breadth of India and Bengal was the epicenter.

The Movement:

In due course of time, 'Swadeshi Movement' was considered as a 'patriotic duty' of every citizen to good domestically manufactured goods and to shun foreign goods. Mass meetings were held all over Bengal and big crowds took the 'Oath of Swadeshi'. Even patients refused to take foreign medicines and were willing to face the consequences. People burnt foreign clothes and foreign cigarettes. The Swadeshi Movement was an immense success. An important aspect of the Swadeshi Movement was the emphasis placed on self Reliance or athma shakthi. Self Reliance means assertion of national dignity honour and self-confidence. In economic field it meant indignation of the industry. Mini textile mills, soap and match factories National banks and insurance companies were started. A prominent part was played by the students of Bengal in the Swadeshi agitation. Destroyed the shops selling foreign cloth and other foreign goods. Women also joined processions and picketed the shops dealing in foreign goods. The programmes of Swadeshi and boycott went hand in hand.

Methods of Swadeshi

- Methods included boycotting of foreign clothes and Other foreign goods
- Public meeting and processions forming corps of volunteers or samitis.
- Use of traditional popular festivals and meals for propaganda to create awareness about Swadeshi.
- Emphasis on self Reliance or athmashakthi.
- Launching program Swadeshi on national education Swadeshi or indigenous Enterprises
- Initiating new trends in Indian painting forms poetry pioneering research in science.
- Call for boycott of schools colleges, councils government services etc headed by Britishers.
- The students of Bengal played a prominent part they practiced and propagated Swadeshi.
- Remarkable aspects was the involvement of women.
- Many prominent Muslims including Abdul Rasool, Liaqat Hussain, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad also joined the movement
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak played the leading role in spreading the moment to the rest of the country.

A two men deputation was appointed by the Congress in 1909 session, which included Surendra Nath Banerjee and Bhupendra Nath Bose to proceed to England to raise the issue of the division of Bengal in front of the concerned officials and to ask for the retraction of the law, though the efforts proved to be fatal. Once again in the 'Allahabad Session' of the Congress in 1910, the matter was brought into light and it was put forward that the rectification of this admitted error will be an act of far sighted statesmanship. Support from Indian National Congress and its leaders influenced the Swadeshi and the Boycott movements that they were successful in achieving substantial advancement in the areas of United Provinces, central Provinces, Bombay Presidency, Punjab and Madras Presidency.

Objectives of the study:

1. To analyse the role of Swadeshi movement in impacting Indian freedom struggle.
2. To understand the methods and means of Swadeshi Movement.
3. To highlight the contribution of Swadeshi Movement to the nation.

Swadeshi Movement occupies a unique place in the history of the freedom movement in India. A great national impulse pervaded the air and brought nationalism into the realm of practical politics. In December 1905, even Jawaharlal Nehru, then at Harrow, was surprised to read in The Times that the Swadeshi Movement had spread to Kashmir. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1908 that the real awakening of India took place after the partition of Bengal. The Swadeshi Movement brought out latent spirit of the people to defy and challenge the authority of the Government with grim determination. The Swadeshi cause, purified by the sufferings of the people, heralded a new destiny in the history of our country.

Contribution of Swadeshi Movement:

The Swadeshi Movement has contributed many valuable and important gifts. Some of them are listed below.

1. It caused a political shake up amongst people living beyond the borders of Bengal.
2. It encouraged small scale and cottage industries and helped in the growth of big industries throughout India.
3. It gave India a scheme of National Education.

4. It gave India, a National Flag
5. Swadeshi Movement was instrumental in giving the People of the country their National Anthem.

Even the latest policies initiated by the Government, such as 'Atma Nirbar Bharata', to support and to strengthen the economic capacities of the country by using the methods of reduced dependency on imports and giving incentives to 'Make in India' projects and so on finds its genesis in Swadeshi Movement only. Self Reliance is the best method and strategy to deal with any difficulty is the lesson, which pandemic Covid-19 has taught us recently. Improving infrastructure and reducing the logistics cost which will work from supply side, and help in reducing production costs, thus making Indian manufactured products more competitive globally. 'Make in India' 2.0 focussing on domestic manufacturing of 15 champion sectors like Textile and Apparels, Food Processing, Gems and Jewellery, Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals, Automotive Industry, Electronics, Leather and Footwear etc., in consultation with respective Ministries. A number of production linked incentives schemes in the manufacturing of mobiles and electronics, API's and medical devices have been approved. More sectors will be considered for suitably incentivizing industry. Phase manufacturing programme is in operation for cellular mobile and e-vehicles. NITI Aayog has identified LED lights, Network products, Medical devices, Pharmaceutical Drugs and Man Made fiber for implementing Phase Manufacturing Programme. 20 sectors have been identified in consultation with industry, where attention would be given to make in India Self reliant. Atmanirbhar Bharat is not about being self contained or being closed to the world, it is about being self sustaining and self generating. Pursuance of policies which promote efficiency, equity and resilience. Its proponents have said that this self reliant policy does not aim to be protectionist in nature. It is not isolating away from the world. Self reliant India translates to being a bigger and more important part of the global economy. Added to this 5 pillars have been identified to achieve Atma Nirbhar Bharat, they are: Economy, Infrastructure, Technology driven systems, Vibrant demography, domestic demand.

Vocal for Local is another flagship programme, which finds its origin in Swadeshi Movement. It is not only about manufacturing goods in India but also promoting those products. For this products must be

made globally competitive. An extension of this is Vocal for global. There are many products and areas, which are catering to needs of the consumers of the globe. These products have made their mark at national and international level. This, apart from sustaining the local production, promoting it across the globe is sure to bring in revolutionary changes on the Indian Economy, which is aspiring to be a 5 billion dollar economy in the near future and trying its level best to become the third largest economy in the world. Therefore, these types of programme will give boost to economic activities and interestingly all these activities finds their genesis in Swadeshi Movement in one way or the other.

CONCLUSION

Swadeshi movement was a country wide movement. It united all country. By this movement Congress became well-organized country wide organization and Khadi became costume of common peoples. In the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Swadeshi movement of congress has done the tremendous job of creating awareness amongst the people. Swadeshi movement gave impendance to the Indian National Movement. Extremists popularly known as Lal, Bal and Pal turned Swadeshi as a mass movement. Due to successful achievement of swadeshi movement British Government has passed the enactment of 1909, i.e. Morley Minto act. This is the success of movement. The Swadeshi movement has a prominent place in politics and social system and Freedom movement of India. Swadeshi marked a major change in the depth and dimensions of political hostility. Never before had the British faced a continental campaign against their rule. Therefore, Swadeshi Movement and Boycott movement is definitely a milestone in the country's freedom struggle.

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