

# The History of Swadeshi Movement: Its Impact on Bengal

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## ABSTRACT

The partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon separated Bengal in two sections. The date of parcel, October 16, 1905, was noticed, on the proposal of Rabindranath, as the Rakhi Bandhan Day. It connoted the insoluble fraternity among rich and low, and among Christian, Mohamedans and Hindus and others. On the recommendation of Ramendrasundar Trivedi the individuals abstained from cooking on the day segment came into power. An explained custom performed by each family including a promise of Swadeshi and firm assurance to cultivate the soul of self-improvement in everyday life. Shops and markets stayed shut, vehicular traffic stopped and life ground to a halt in Calcutta. Parades were taken out and individuals tied Rakhi on one another's wrists. A major public gathering was held at night. Begun with an exceptional enthusiastic obstruction against provincial force's hostile measure, the development before long rose above its fairly restricted and prompt target. It was changed into a powerful upsurge on the course of the Indian public battle. In this article I propose to display the Boycott and Swadeshi program were interlinked. The achievement of the previous relied upon the accomplishment of endeavors in developing home enterprises. Mahatma Gandhi composed that the genuine arousing of India occurred after the Partition of Bengal 1905.

**Keywords:** *Swadeshi, Bengal, Nationalism, Foreign Goods, Boycott.*

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In Calcutta, Howrah and abutting regions material plants, public banks, hosiery, tobacco and cleanser production lines, tanneries, synthetic works, insurance agencies and so on, were set up to underline the positive part of Swadeshi. Swadeshi stores were opened. Gathering of volunteers worked untiringly. Different samities, papers and diaries promoted the development. Public gathering and parades, picketing, huge fire of unfamiliar merchandise, energetic tunes and blazing talks kept the soul of patriotism living and consuming. Calcutta was the operational hub. Public schooling was turning into a reality in Calcutta. Hostile to Partition fomentation and Swadeshi development was set apart by works agitation and strikes. Nirvan Basu commented in his article *Bangabhanga*: Shilpa Vabana O Shramik Sangathan that in spite of different impediment and shortcoming Swadeshi development unexpectedly crossed over the inlet between the work distress and patriot development. In October Anglo-Indian Railway watches took to the streets. In this month Calcutta cable car conductor's leave occurred. Administrations in five segments were influenced, and meeting of the strikers was held at Wellington Square. A strike by coolies at the Ralli Brothers jute works was held at Chitpur. 11,000 carters were off the road and there was not a solitary truck or coolie close to any of the four ends of the Eastern Bengal State Railway. (Sarkar, 1973, p.174)

Hindu-Muslim connection presented most noteworthy test before the Swadeshi development. Sumit Sarker said that the mission against a discretionary authoritative segment, dispatched for the sake of fundamental solidarity of Bengali talking inhabited, finished with their more cognizance of common antagonism than any other time in recent memory. To draw in individual's distinctive Hindu strict images and Hindu God and Goddess of Shakti beginning were utilized. Pioneers like Aurobindo Ghosh liked to utilize religion as a medium to arrive at the general population. To Swadeshi volunteers The Gita turned into the wellspring of motivation. He demonstrated how "significance appended to strict revivalism". (Bandopadhyay, 2007, p.256) There was a sure pattern of Hindu Revivalism and this caused somewhat a feeling of separation of the Muslim people group. Also from the most recent many years of the nineteenth century English turned into the all plaguing language and by learning English numerous Hindus gained ground than the Muslims in Government occupations and autonomous calling like law, instructing and so forth while the Muslim lingered behind. From the earliest starting point of the 20th century a Western instructed "working class" arranged in and around Calcutta and including primarily of attorneys, pleaders educators, understudies, Zamindars and so on assumed significant part in framing incipient patriotism.

Notwithstanding, Swadeshi promulgation subsequently took up Hindu Muslims solidarity as one of its chief subject, and would communicate it through incalculable addresses, flyers and melodies. Hooghly locale was very little mixed over the segment tumult, however took up the Swadeshi development with life and cheerful readiness. At a gathering hung on the premises of the Goswami family at Srerampur, Babu Debendra Lal Goswami expressed that he had by and by seen sweepers on boats conveying sugar and salt, toss bones on to the cargoes of sugar and salt. Raja Peari Mohan Mukherjee visited Dhaniakhali and Uttarpura marketplace and cautioned the retailers to buy not any more unfamiliar salt, sugar and cigarettes. Peari Mohan Mukherji took a distinct fascination for the development and directed on a few gatherings. The vital towns and town in Nadia immediately took up the disturbance against the utilization unfamiliar merchandise, especially Manchester garments, salt, and sugar. Pleders and schoolmasters busied themselves addressing regarding the matter. The instructors and young men of a few schools raised assets out of which they bought cigarettes and made huge fire of them. The standard parade of school children and others bareheaded and barefooted, walked through head towns, grieving for the parcel of Bengal. Endeavors were made to begin swadeshi stores. Be that as it may, they were imploded after a concise presence for need of help.

Against parcel meeting were belittled by pleaders, mukhtears and schools instructors in this region. A couple hundred rupees were gathered for beginning fabric factories in Bengal, and may have been since credited to the public asset. In Darjeeling endeavors were made by Bengalis to enroll the feelings of the Nepalese in the Swadeshi development. Gatherings were held and talks were conveyed in Nepali; however the development met with practically nothing, assuming any, and support in this region. Little was gotten with this locale of Jalpaiguri the Anti-parcel disturbance until the swadeshi development showed up. The principal movers were taken by Babu Umagati Roy and Tarani Prasad Roy who urged the individuals to quit any pretense of utilizing merchandise especially made of England. In September, 1905 a few understudies made a huge fire of cigarettes, cricket bats, footballs, garments and so on, and a picture of Lord Curzon was additionally scorched in the fire. A few pleaders said they might want to murder him.

In Eastern Bengal Anti-parcel fomentation and Swadeshi development spread in Dacca, Bakarganj, Kishorganj, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Pabna, Comilla and in some different pieces of Eastern Bengal with impressive Muslim cooperation. Distinctive legends were made observing Hindu Muslim solidarity. Anyway there was public strain and collective mobs occurred during 1906-07. Progressive Terrorism was spread by Secret Societies and 'rebellious' pamphlet like Sonar Bangla likewise got round. Endeavors were made for joining Hindus and Muslims. Dacca Anushilan Samity was a significant one. Mutual scorn was fanned ceaselessly and numerous Hindu Zamindars, pleaders and others attempted to advance Swadeshi forcibly. Then again from its very birth in 1906 at Dacca Muslim League was an "adversary of Swadeshi." (Ray, 2011, p.147) Problem of Hindu-Muslim solidarity during the Anti-segment unsettling and Swadeshi development was perplexing and shifted all around. Endeavors were made to detail solid associations with clear Swadeshi programs in the regions and town levels. Rabindranath explained his idea of advancing self improvement and recovery of conventional town society. However, his requests of valuable 'non-political' town work met with little achievement.

The Swadeshi development spread all through the area, and in October (1905) the offer of Manchester material and Liverpool salt was accounted for to have tumbled off impressively. The occurrences of social blacklist likewise occurred. The muchis of Faridpur pledged to decline to repair European shoes and the washer men to wash European garments. In Khulana one Ali Ahmed Khan, Head-Master of the Mirzapur Middle English School seems to have taken an unmistakable part in attempting to convince the Muhammadans to participate in the development. In a brief timeframe Swadeshi development spread in Mymensingh region. Head towns were overflowed with flyer and broadsheets. A handout called Sonar Bangla attempted to join Hindus and Muslim and utilized searing dialects against the British Raj. Understudies were utilized in stretching out the fomentation to the towns. They lectured the uncleanness of salt and sugar, entered shops, and demolished salt, material, porcelain, sand and other European-made articles. In early piece of the fomentation Rajshahi area was preeminent in holding against parcel and swadeshi gatherings. Nearby pleaders were frantic in their endeavors to beat the lack of concern of the individuals in the swadeshi. The rebellious pamphlet who is our King was disseminated among the nearby school instructor.

In some instances goods were forcibly taken away from purchasers and deliberately burnt or otherwise destroyed, and price paid to the owners. It was said that the Maharaja of Cossimbazar issued a warning to his servants to abstain from foreign goods and promised to spend two lakhs of rupees in providing handloom for his people. As a consequence of amalgamation with Assam common people of this area feared they were forced to serve as coolies in tea garden of Assam, the honour of their women would be violated and children were subjected to torture by the planters. The district of Tippera was proved a 'hot bed' of agitation. Articles in the local newspapers, the "pro-swadeshi" preaching's of a Serajganj Muhammadan and a few local Muhammadans, the picketing students and the active co-operation of Panchayati Presidents added fuel to fire. Two swadeshi store shops opened and soon a falling off of 25 per cent in the sale of Manchester cloth was noticed in Comilla, and Liverpool salt was displeased by karkatch in consequence of the circulation of the usual reports regarding uncleanness. In spite of this movement some of the shopkeepers were importing English goods. Some indented for

country-made cloths from Nagpur and other mills, but they could not get the necessary supply and are obtaining Manchester cloths and other foreign articles.

Swadeshi movement was often been situated in its metropolitan setting. Calcutta, Dacca, Mymensing, Rangpur or Barishal figured prominently in the historical discourses on Swadeshi than the happenings in the remote countryside. The Intelligence Branch records quite clearly indicated that Swadeshi was much a new gospel in the countryside as it in Calcutta. City-based leaders visited Bengal villages frequently and at the same time local leaders embraced and spread the spirit of Swadeshi. Hitherto-prevailing rural-urban divide was breaking down and there was greater interaction between the two. The impact of the Swadeshi, the relatively even tenor of life in Bengal villages was affected by the great wave of patriotism that swept through the province and beyond. A vernacular leaflet entitled *Sonar Bangla* was widely circulated in the countryside as well as other parts of Eastern Bengal and Assam and created tremendous up-roar. It created a strong feeling for revolutionary up-surge and impetus for Hindu-Muslim unity.

There are other vernacular leaflets circulated and left strong impact. In one such literature it is written,

...as long as the whole of Bengal was one and undivided the Bengalis national life, national literature, national hope and aspirations were undivided...the whole of Bengali people formed one race and was one at heart. But now the Bengalis are being divided into two parts and unity and national life about to torn asunder. If we do not now endeavour to remain united and try our utmost to prevent this partition of Bengal then our national life will be destroyed forever, and the Bengali's hope and aspiration and his social and political movements will be retarded all time. (Sarkar, 1973)

British Govt tried every possible way to discourage the circulation of this kind of leaflets, without much success. The Governor Circular and warning had little effect. Such leaflets left tremendous impact on people's mind. British Police did its best to suppress these seditious leaflets. But without the fear of arrest and torture Bengalis were printing and spreading these leaflets and created havoc in the British mind. This kind of leaflets encouraged young minds with revolutionary ideas and ideals in different parts of India in later period also. (Pandit, pp.601-607)

Nirad C. Chaudhury's parental home was in Kishorganj. In his Autobiography of an Unknown Indian he talked about how placid backwater of Kishorganj became a centre of 'great change' with the advent of Swadeshi movement. Swadeshi had brought qualitative transformation of Bengal countryside and Kishorganj is an example of how deep and abiding such transformation had been. At that time

...school students and teachers were at the forefront of the agitation. Noticing the interest school students in cricket he suggested a cricket match and offered to present a cup himself. But at the end of the match senior school boys were refused to take the cup as they found that it was made in England. They were threatened to be expelled. Guardians called a meeting and it was decided that nobody would send their sons to school unless all were taken back. (Chaudhury, 2012, p.197)

Tussle between the citizens of Kishorganj and the Magistrate were going on. Mr Stinton threatened to call Gurkhas. At last the Kishorganj guardians declared that they had yielded to the magistrate only to spare the town molestation at the hand of Gurkhas.

The Julan mela of 1905 marked the introduction of boycott as a political weapon in Kishorganj. The word 'swadeshi' came into use. An attempt was made to enlist 'the sympathies of the general public, even that of Musalmans, by representing that the partition involved the introduction of Assam laws. Patriotic sentiments were evoked by the cry of 'Bande Mataram.' On 4 February 1906 'a weaving school' was established with six fly shuttle looms in the Atarsbari Cut cherry at Kishorganj. Interestingly official approval was signified by the second Deputy Magistrate Babu Ramesh Chandra Singha and the opening ceremony was attended by Sub divisional Officer. Bepin Chandra Pal, Aurobinda Ghosh and Subodh Chandra Mullick visited Kishorigaung in April 1906. This marked an epoch in the agitation ( 1 ) Meetings were held in the house of Peari Mohan Rai and in the Town Hall. Boycott resolutions were passed and 'inflammatory speeches' were delivered by the visitors.

The effect of the Jamalpur disturbance early in May 1907 'was a general Hindu panic'. It was 'rumored' that the riots had been initiated by the Nawab of Dacca with the connivance of. Students armed with lathis turned out to parade Kishorganj bazaar. Musalmans were also undoubtedly excited. The Musalmans' consciousness of social and religious solidarity was aroused and Musalman meetings were held in several places. However, after a few scares conditions again became normal, though the breach between the two communities persisted. Mr. S. E. Stinton, Sub divisional Officer of Kishoregang reported that the movement has been steadily spreading throughout the whole middle class of educated and semi-educated Hindus. Racial and religious feelings have been played upon. His report was an important pointer to the ongoing Hindu discontents. It was noted by the Sub divisional Officer that the idea of political independence has been cunningly wrapped up in association of racial, class and even caste aggrandizement, and in reminiscence of an imaginary golden age of Hindu freedom. The services of Brhamins have been enlisted by a reactionary movement.

However, we may pause for a while and take closer look at Stinton's observation. After all, as an administrator, his brief was to suppress Swadeshi spirit which was perceived as a threat to the Government. With meticulous care he gathered information about run up to the agitation. Stinton, like his colleagues in other affected areas, was unwilling to concede legitimacy to the movement, and they believed that it was orchestrated by the so-called wire-pullers from outside. But the whole story would not be so stereotyped. It is true that the Swadeshi spirit received impetus when Bepin Chandra Pal, Arabinda Ghosh and Subodh Chandra Mullick visited Kishorganj; but if we follow literary sources and other sources like folklores then we can see how local population especially students and teachers participated in the movement with spontaneity and their course of action was not always toed with Calcutta, Dacca or Mymensingh. Mr. Stinton talked about pressure tactics of the agitators. But we have to agree that only on the basis of pressure politics and glory of Golden Hindu past such a deep rooted movement could not be possible. Stinton talked about educated and semi- educated classes; but fact was that many people of the lower order, many of whom did not possess any education at all, participated; Stinton's Report also indirectly admitted this fact.

Yes, communal tension and interest of clashes were there. Shri Chaudhuri showed how communal tension began to mar social relations in Kishorganj. He recalled,

We began to hear angry comments in the mouth of the elders that the Muslims were in favour of partition and on the side of the English. Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, all the protagonist of the Muslim League and new Muslim politics, became our betenoire-and we contemptuously called him 'The One-eyed.' (Nirad Chaudhury, 2012, p.197)

Chaudhury further added that our Muslim school-fellows were beginning to air the fact of their being Muslims rather more consciously than before and with a touch of assertiveness. Mr. Stanton's Report was also reflecting this kind of feeling. We have to agree that many time national ecstasy was marred by communal agony and this indeed was a very serious limitation of the Swadeshi movement. Here Sandip was a revolutionary and active protagonist of Swadeshi and Boycott during Anti-Partition agitation. He went to the village at the zamindari of Nikhil. Here we can see that Nikhil was not against swadeshi, but he was against pressure tactics of the agitators and forceful burning of foreign clothes. All these led to destruction of communal harmony and ultimately to Hindu-Muslim riot. Here Tagore voiced his apathy toward use of force and condemn for the disregard to communal harmony by the agitators. He realized that the march toward Swaraj might began with Anti-Partition agitation and Swadeshi, but there should not be any excess, people must be careful see to it that the path towards freedom might not be lost in terror.

Rabindranath was at first...became one of its leaders...But by 1907, the movement degenerated into violence between Hindu and Muslims...A disillusioned Tagore withdrew from it. (Dutta and Robinson, 2005, p.61))

As in later period 'militant nationalism' became strong. British repression became unbearable. After 1908 the national movement as a whole declined. In 1909, in Aurobindo Ghose's words,

...real purpose of the Morley Minto Reforms was to divide the nationalist ranks and to check growing unity among Indians by encouraging the growth of Muslim communalism. (Chandra, 1988, pp.141-142)

To conclude I would like to say that, the anti partition agitation culminating in the Swadeshi movement had its obvious limitations. The movement fell far short of its objectives, and all round industrial regeneration. The dream of National Education not fully materialized the efforts to boycott foreign goods and promote swadeshi industries left little permanent impression on the national economy. Rural upliftment and strong village organization proved upliftment. Important segment of the peasantry could not be possible bring within the fold of the movement. Important Muslim leaders has joined the Swadeshi movement, but the main weakness of the Swadeshi movement was it inability to bridge the gulf between the minds of Hindus and Muslims. In the latter period the movement turns towards murderous outrage and dacoity. Rashbehari Bose was behind this attack. Bengal provincial Conference Dacca 22 March 1913 expressed it anxiety over this great misfortune and added that its shadow has fallen over re-united Bengal. But Swadeshi Mantra of Bengal was not in vein. It no longer remained confined within the boundaries at Bengal. Its impact spread far and wide in other parts of India and bought nationalism from a realm of theory and sentiments into the field of practical life. Swadeshi movement incorporated divergent tendencies and forces which would shape future India.

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